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"Who is it who dares to sing thus?"
ORIGINAL ETCHING BY JOHN SLOAN.

The Works of

CHARLES PAUL DE KOCK

With a General Introduction by

JULES CLARETIE

THE GOGO FAMILY

Translated into English by

EDITH MARY NORRIS

VOLUME II

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CONTENTS

VOLUME II

CHAPTER I PAGE

An Ostentatious Dinner. M. François . . . 1

CHAPTER II

Papa Savenay. The Evening 14

CHAPTER III

The Potter's Shop 38

CHAPTER IV

The Old Man and the Young Girl 53

CHAPTER V

Rose Recognizes Papa Savenay 75

CHAPTER VI

An Author's Tickets 94

CHAPTER VII

The Hidden Picture 124

CHAPTER VIII

An Unexpected Visit 162

CONTENTS

CHAPTER IX

The Cousins 190

CHAPTER X

A Niece Called Gogo 202

CHAPTER XI

The Presentation 212

CHAPTER XII

Rose-Marie at Her Uncle's 223

CHAPTER XIII

A Promenade. A Meeting. A Confidence . . 244

CHAPTER XIV

A Violet in a Flower Bed 266

CHAPTER XV

The Proposal of Marriage 294

CHAPTER XVI

The Finger of Providence 327

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS
VOLUME II

"WHO IS IT WHO DARES TO SING THUS?" (See page 255.) . . . . . Frontispiece
Original etching by John Sloan.

PAGE

"IS IT POSSIBLE THAT YOU'RE TIPSY, FRANÇOIS?" 4
Photogravure from original drawing by F. R. Gruger.

PAPA SAVENAY . . . HELD THE PISTOL IN HIS HAND 87
Original etching by Louis Meynelle.

"HERE IS MY COUSIN, ROSE-MARIE" 217
Photogravure from original drawing by Albert Sterner.

CHAPTER I

An Ostentatious Dinner. M. François

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, will you kindly look for your names, and find your own places," said M. Saint-Godibert, as he seated Madame Doguin and Madame de Broussaillon near himself.

"The names are on the covers, you will observe," added Madame Saint-Godibert, "it is very much handier and enables each one to find his or her place at once."

"I don't believe that can be good form," said M. Brouillard, looking for his name at each cover. "Where am I to sit, Cousin Saint-Godibert? I cannot find my place; I presume, however, that I have one."

"Over here, my dear cousin, if you please," said M. Saint-Godibert, in a conciliatory tone; "between our good friends M. de Broussaillon and M. Soufflat."

M. Brouillard lengthened his muzzle and went ill-humoredly towards his place, muttering,—

"That's it, between two idiots who never listen to what anyone is saying to them and at the foot of the table — a villanous place. They'll pay me for that, I can tell them!"

Frederic was very well satisfied because they had put him between Madame Marmodin and his pretty aunt. The latter did not appear so well pleased, and a certain look which she directed towards M. Dernesty seemed to indicate that she would have preferred other neighbors than her nephew and M. Cendrillon. The dandy answered the handsome blonde's glance by one even more eloquent.

For his part, M. Marmodin, who despite his love for the Romans, was very jealous of his wife, appeared extremely averse to her being placed beside the seductive Frederic; as he was opposite to them from time to time he cast glances at his wife which should have said many things to her, but his wife made no pretence of paying any attention to him.

Hardly was each one placed when Frederic burst into a great shout of laughter and his neighbors did not fail to ask him the cause of it.

He showed them François, who was then opposite to them, and who was supporting himself on his master's chair and endeavoring to maintain a decent gravity, but whose reddish-violet color seemed to indicate that he was in a condition ill-suited to the occasion, and which explained the different blunders he had already made. We must recall the fact that after having soaked his mistress and the tablecloth with champagne, François had fled, overwhelmed by the weight of the male-

dictions poured out on him by everybody. But in escaping, the Norman servant had carried off the bottle which had caused his misadventure. Hardly had he reached his own room when he thought he would taste this wine which imitated fireworks; the foam which had escaped had only consumed about a third of the bottle. François insinuated the neck of it into his mouth; he swallowed a throatful first, and he found it rather an odd drink; he took two others and found it very good; he swallowed some more, and this time he found it so much to his taste that he only stopped when there was nothing more in the bottle.

It was the first time that M. François had drunk champagne, and he soon began to feel gay and lively; he experienced a desire to dance, to sing, and when Mademoiselle Fifine came to his room to look for him, she found him exercising himself in jumping, with feet joined, over his water jug, and laughing like mad because he had broken the handle off.

"What are you doing there, François?" said the spruce Fifine, looking at her fellow-servant in astonishment.

"Faith, mamzelle, I'm amusing myself — I feel like laughing."

"You don't seem very sorry for the stupid things you've done. Your employers are greatly irritated against you."

"Oh, that wasn't such a very bad thing to do,

just to sprinkle the headdress of that fat Arabian. If it would make her hair grow it wouldn't be so bad. Her hair is so pretty, three little locks, like Cadet-Roussel."

"Will you be quiet, François — if anyone should hear you! Well, I've obtained your pardon, and you are to wait at table."

"Oh, that's all right, I consent to that, provided that I'm with you, Mademoiselle Fifine."

So saying M. François clasped Fifine's waist with his two big hands.

"Well, what are you doing now, M. François, what does this mean?"

"Oh, you're mighty particular to speak to me like that."

"Will you have done, the idea of such conduct — it is forbidden."

"Bah! forbidden! and why does that old miser of a master always have his arm around your waist?"

"What! M. François, you dare to say —"

"Oh, hang it, haven't I seen him doing it — and his son, too — and his nephew, too, when he comes — and his friend, too. I'm only doing like the rest of them."

Mademoiselle Fifine disengaged herself from François' arms and escaped, exclaiming,—

"Is it possible that you're tipsy, François? That's nice, when you're to wait on table, as you must, since there's nobody else to do so. Go to

"Is it possible that you're tipsy, François?"

PHOTOGRAVURE FROM ORIGINAL DRAWING BY F. R. GRUGER

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the kitchen, take some coffee, and try to pull yourself together a bit, and remember how to behave when you're waiting at table."

M. François wished to follow the maid's instructions. He went down to the kitchen for some coffee, but while there he found some rum which was to flavor a jelly; he drank a part of what was in the bottle, then, that no one might notice it, he looked for something with which he could refill the bottle. A cup of bouillon stood near him; profiting by the cook's absence, he poured the bouillon into the bottle, saying,—

"I don't know what that is, so much the worse —it's the same color, and that's the principal thing."

Seeing the cook come running he salted, peppered, and sugared some made dishes, haphazard, saying,—

"I came to lend you a hand."

The cook hastily dismissed the new helper, who had disarranged her stewpans, and M. François then went into the anteroom, where we have seen how he announced Frederic and his friends.

"I think that servant is tipsy," whispered Madame Marmodin to Frederic.

"I think so, too, but it isn't necessary to say anything about it; it will be amusing. He'll make some scenes in his way."

"Francine! Francine, I've been asking you for some time to pass the olives," cried M. Marmodin,

with an accent of marked anger, because he had seen Frederic whisper to his wife.

But Francine, who did not pay much attention when her husband spoke, sent him the radishes, saying,—

"Don't eat too many, they'll make you ill."

"She doesn't hear what I say to her," muttered the savant, turning to the literary man. "Oh, these women, these women! You remember what Tertullian says in regard to the frivolous sex, Mondigo?"

Mondigo, who was finishing his soup, turned towards M. Marmodin, answering,—

"You know I've changed my denouement. I end with a lemon instead of an orange. You tell me that the lemon is eaten as a fruit in the South, but you'll see how I've brought it in. Oh, I don't think you'll recognize my play."

"Yes, yes, indeed!"

"I'll tell you about it this evening."

"Francine, hum! the olives. Decidedly she doesn't hear me."

"François, will you soon have done moving my chair?" said M. Saint-Godibert, turning towards his servant. "What are you doing, there?—come and serve the madeira, and remember what I have told you."

"Oh, yes, monsieur, I know my lesson."

François approached each guest, holding the bottle of madeira under his arm. He had already

poured for two persons, who had taken but little of it, when he reached M. Cendrillon, the latter, in place of raising his glass, said to the servant who had ceased pouring for him,—

"Well, what are you doing? what are you stopping for, my good fellow? Fill my glass, oh, I'm a judge of good wine!"

"No," answered François, passing on, "your's is two-thirds full — no further, that's the rule."

"What's this booby talking about?" cried M. Cendrillon, laughing, "Saint-Godibert, your servant refuses to give me any more madeira. He thinks that I've had enough of it, he's afraid that I shall make myself ill."

"How's that? What does this mean?" cried M. Saint-Godibert, while making eyes and gestures to his servant. "Frederic, go and pour some madeira for M. Cendrillon."

"Not a bit of it!" declared François, going to some one else. "This gentleman's had his measure — I remember your instructions well, you told me to give the least possible quantity of your madeira, and never to pour a glass more than two-thirds full. Isn't that true, now?"

The company looked queer; there were some bursts of laughter that were ill-concealed in handkerchiefs, while M. Saint-Godibert, who had become purple, cried,—

"What a brute of a servant! What an ass. He understands everything wrong, I ordered him,

on the contrary, to pour the glasses as full as possible. Happily, my manner of entertaining is known to you."

"Yes, yes, indeed," said Cousin Brouillard, holding his glass to François, "oh, we know what to expect of you. Come, François, your master tells you to pour them as full as possible."

"Oh, yes, indeed," muttered François; "he says that at present, but that isn't what he said to me a while ago."

Fifine went behind François, pulled him by the vest, and whispered to him,—

"Hold your tongue, why don't you? François, you are tipsy; you'll get yourself discharged."

François only shrugged his shoulders and walked on with his madeira, saying,—

"I know what I'm doing, they gave me my orders, if they give me contrary ones now that will only confuse me."

"For Mademoiselle Soufflat — pass some to Mademoiselle Soufflat," cried M. Saint-Godibert, who wished that they should not listen further to his servant.

"I have the honor of drinking to your good health," said Major Krouteberg, turning towards the mistress of the house.

"Ah, major, I thank you. But M. Roquet has had nothing, can I help you to anything, M. Roquet?"

M. Roquet, who was also a little put out because he had not been placed beside the lady of the house, answered with one eye on a dish of fish and the other one on a vol-au-vent,—

"You are very good, madame, I will take some of that."

And Madame Saint-Godibert at once sent some fish to M. Roquet, who wished for vol-au-vent.

François, having finished his round with the madeira, was again going to balance himself on his master's chair, the latter daring to say nothing for fear the servant would say or do something else that was awkward. But Cousin Brouillard, who was only too delighted to draw François out, signed from afar for him to approach, and when the servant was near him he said very loud,—

"François, give me some fresh bread, this is as stale as the devil! I detest stale bread!"

"Fresh bread!" answered François, laughing; "oh, I'm not so stupid as that — you would eat too much of it, we haven't any, monsieur has forbidden it."

"My God! What patience must one possess to put up with such an idiot!" cried M. Saint-Godibert, "he has understood everything wrong to-day, absolutely everything. I wished to discharge him before dinner, and I should have done well had I done so, I who really scolded him because they didn't take some warm bread."

"Be easy, my dear M. Saint-Godibert," said

M. Dernesty, "it is very easily seen that your servant isn't in full possession of his wits, the best way is to laugh at his stupidities."

"Yes," said Angélique, smiling at her neighbor; "M. Dernesty is perfectly right, we can only laugh at it."

"For Mademoiselle Soufflat," cried the host to his servant. "My son, I hope that you will see that Mademoiselle Soufflat wants nothing!"

Julien said some words that nobody understood.

"Oh, assuredly your uncle has intentions in regard to Mademoiselle Soufflat and his son," said Madame Marmodin to Frederic.

"I'm afraid of it for my poor cousin's sake!"

"Afraid! but she's very rich, that young lady."

"Yes, but just see that nose, one would almost swear it was false."

"Ha, ha! how naughty you are!"

"I daresay she wishes it was false, unhappily it's a very animated phenomenon."

"Francine, Francine, pass me some salt," said M. Marmodin in a voice stifled by jealousy.

"Why, mercy, my dear, you've a salt-cellar before your eyes, isn't that enough. Did the Romans use salt to that extent?"

"I don't know whether François is tipsy," said M. Brouillard, addressing one of his neighbors, "but the fact is it's horribly stingy to make us eat bread three days old. Now, here's a fricassee of

chicken that is sugared — it is certainly sugared — it is not good at all?"

"I take the liberty of drinking to your health," said Major Krouteberg, bowing to his neighbor.

"Thanks a thousand times, major — M. Dernesty, you don't drink."

"Excuse me, my dear lady, but one must spare one's energies. All your wines are excellent, you treat us so well. One fares as well here as at the minister's table."

"Ah, M. Dernesty!"

M. Saint-Godibert, who had heard these words, was not over-pleased, he sent a dish covered with truffles to Dernesty, saying to him,—

"For Mademoiselle Soufflat."

"Oh, you wish me to pass these to Mademoiselle Soufflat," said Dernesty; "very well."

"No, no, my dear Dernesty, I made a mistake, I passed them to you — Mademoiselle Soufflat is served — but I can offer her some more. My son, take good care of Mademoiselle Soufflat."

"Yes, father."

"Hang it," said M. Cendrillon, "if that young lady eats all they pass to her she will soon have her fill."

"Oh, mercy, what is M. Cendrillon going to say now?" murmured the robust Angélique looking at the major.

"I didn't hear very distinctly," answered the

major, "was he not speaking of a little dog who would soon have his fill?"

"Hush, hush, Major Krouteberg, not another word on the subject or I shall vanish."

"Why, this jelly has a very singular taste," said M. Brouillard, making a grimace. "What is the jelly flavored with?"

"Why, with rum, is it not, cousin, my cook is a veritable jewel, she has been in Lord Wellington's kitchens, she makes sweet dishes to perfection, she makes puddings absolutely as they are made on the Thames."

"Then I can hardly believe that she made this," said M. Brouillard to his neighbors. "Taste it gentlemen, it's detestable. It tastes like jelly made from scraps of meat."

"For Mademoiselle Soufflat!" cried M. Saint-Godibert serving the rum jelly a second time; but Mademoiselle Soufflat refused; she had done like everybody else — left the jelly on her plate. Madame Saint-Godibert herself exclaimed,—

"It is extraordinary; this is not so good as usual!"

"Not so good! You are very frank, cousin. I should say this jelly was made to be served under a ham, and not as a sweet."

"I have an idea that François has been into the kitchen," said Frederic to his neighbors, "there, look at him, the clown can't resist his laughter when he sees us tasting the jelly."

In fact, M. François, who saw the grimaces of the guests on tasting the jelly remembered what he had done to the bottle of rum in the kitchen, and he shook his master's chair still more as he abandoned himself to his gayety. M. Saint-Godibert pretended not to notice it.

"Since the jelly is a failure let us have some charlotte-russe," said M. Saint-Godibert, serving that dish. "Come, my dear Cendrillon, have some of this."

"The devil; you've stuffed me so already that I don't know if I can manage any more."

"What, my dear Cendrillon, you who are so hearty an eater; can't you take any more?"

"Oh, I can take it well enough, but my digestive organs will be taxed to get rid of it, ha, ha!"

M. Cendrillon's joke seemed lacking in good taste to the company. Frederic alone shouted with laughter, and Madame Marmodin had a great desire to do likewise.

As to Madame Saint-Godibert, she raised her eyes to the ceiling, as though she were going to weep. Then she exclaimed,—

"Some water, major; pray give me a glass of water!"

CHAPTER II

Papa Savenay. The Evening

Some few moments elapsed, there was a lull in the conversation which was broken at last by the man of the railway, whose attention had been caught by Mademoiselle Fifine's neat figure and natty costume as she deftly passed around the table and waited on the guests with her accustomed despatch.

"Come," said M. Cendrillon, "if you have a rascal of a man-servant, my dear Godibert, you certainly have, on the other hand, an extremely pleasing maid-servant, and one who seems to understand her business perfectly. I must make myself a present of a maid-servant like that. I should put her to all kinds of work; I should make her useful, I can tell you."

"Yes, Fifine does everything well, she is a very good maid," answered the host, who was extremely reluctant that M. Cendrillon should make his jokes on Mademoiselle Fifine, and hastened to add,—

"Well, then, capitalist, what is doing in business? You, who are a man of enterprise, no doubt have something in train."

"My faith, no, not at this moment; I am resting and waiting for a good occasion to present itself. But, apropos of business, you have never spoken to me of that honest man of my department whom I sent you some time ago, Papa Savenay."

"Papa Savenay, well, what is he, a peer of France?"

"No, he is a good fellow who has long been the secretary, kept the books, of an ironmaster in the neighborhood of Nemours, where I live in the summer, where I have a good deal of property. Some months ago he fell into a very pretty inheritance which he had been far from expecting. Sixty thousand francs came to him all of a sudden. For one who has no further ambition than to finish his career in tranquillity it is a fortune. Father Savenay is over sixty years old and has worked long enough to desire rest, and my faith, he gave his notice to his ironmaster, and came to find me with his sixty thousand francs, saying to me, 'Monsieur Cendrillon you understand business, the placing of funds; here are mine, will you take them and pay me an income, or could you advise me of a good way to invest my money?' I at that moment knew not what to do with the capital. I answered Papa Savenay, 'My friend I will not take your money, because I have already too much which is idle, but if you wish to go to Paris I will direct you to one of

my friends, Saint-Godibert, he is a banker, he is a man of probity, prudent, he will take your funds and place them where they will yield you an income; you can even remain in Paris, where with your little fortune you can live very happily, and where you can procure for yourself a thousand comforts.' The good man thanked me heartily, and exclaimed that I had given him a good idea, that he should pass all the winter, at least, in Paris; I gave him your address, a letter of recommendation to you, and some days afterwards he came to bid me adieu. He had his little horse, his baggage behind him, his fortune in his pocket-book, and he was going thus to Paris by short stages."

"Well, then, my dear M. Cendrillon, I can assure you that I have neither seen or heard of this M. Savenay. Coming from you I should certainly have paid attention to him, I should have treated him with consideration. Are you sure you gave him my address here?"

"Oh, very sure, the devil, you astonish me, you even make me feel uneasy. Some time after he left I went to Lyons, then I returned here, and, my faith, I have so many things on my mind; when one has so much capital to employ, you understand — I had altogether forgotten my old Papa Savenay."

"I understand that perfectly, and you say that this honest man has started for Paris."

"It's in the neighborhood of two months ago — two months and some days perhaps,— since I saw him start from Nemours."

"It must be," said M. Brouillard, "that he has come by very short stages, since he has not travelled nineteen leagues in two months, for it's not more than that from here to Nemours."

"But he hasn't even made the nineteen leagues; it must be that some accident has happened on the way to this poor Papa Savenay."

"Perhaps he has been robbed and murdered, some one must have known that he had a large sum upon him; it was very imprudent for an old man to travel on horseback with sixty thousand francs about him."

"That's what I said to Papa Savenay, but he always sees everything rose-colored and answered me, laughing, 'Is there any danger of my being taken for a rich man in these country clothes; nothing will happen to me, there is no danger, and, besides, I shall be very careful to travel only during the day; as soon as night appears I shall go into an inn, or into some peasant's house,' and then he went off cheerfully, poor man. Hang it! I shall be grieved if any misfortune has happened to him, for it was I who gave him the idea of coming to Paris; tomorrow I shall write to Nemours to learn if there is any news of him, and here I'll seek to inform myself — I do not know where — what the devil, a man cannot disappear

like that without anybody learning what has become of him."

This history had put an end to all the little private conversations, each one lent his attention, and when M. Cendrillon had ceased to speak a long silence reigned among the company. It seemed as though the gayety, the good-humor of the guests had been put to flight since Papa Savenay had been under discussion.

M. Saint-Godibert did his best to resuscitate the conversation, the dessert was served, the champagne was brought in by François, who offered to open it, but he was positively forbidden to touch a bottle. Finally, the sparkling foam brought out the shouts of laughter, Major Krouteberg lifted his glass on high and proposed the health of the mistress of the house ; such propositions as these one feels that he can never refuse. After the robust Angélique's health had been drunk, M. Saint-Godibert hastened to propose a toast to Mademoiselle Soufflat. M. Brouillard muttered in such a manner as to be heard,—

"And for what reason is he wishing that we should drink the health of Mademoiselle Soufflat? what do we owe to this mademoiselle? Is it because of her nose that we must accord her this politeness? I would just as soon drink a toast to my portress."

M. Cendrillon, not wishing to remain any longer in the background, drank to the prosperity

of railways, to the success of his enterprises, to the success of a quarry which he was having excavated, and an artesian well which he was having bored.

And Cousin Brouillard said to his neighbors, "Here is one of us who is still without ceremony, he drinks to his business, and he proposes a toast to us — what are his quarry and his wells to us? It's very funny, in truth. Gentlemen, I have some corns on my feet which make me suffer, and I propose to drink to their entire extirpation."

But before the person next to M. Brouillard had answered to this proposition, Madame Saint-Godibert arose from the table, gave the signal, and the guests returned to the drawing-room.

There the groups formed themselves anew. Dernesty found himself near the languorous Clémence; Mondigo seized upon M. Doguin, whom nobody wished to be near — for reasons; but an author who desires to portray the plot of his play is capable of passing over some little disagreeables, and this is what the latter did in addressing M. Doguin. The young Julien felt himself revive when he was no longer beside Mademoiselle Soufflat, who, since the dinner, seemed to be seeking for breath.

M. Marmodin, buried deep with M. Villarsec in a profound discussion on coffee, which he pretended to have been known and relished by the Romans under the name of hippocras, did not

notice that the seductive Frederic was still beside his wife, and that he seemed to be speaking to her in a very animated manner.

It is rare that at the end of a grand dinner all heads are alike calm and cool; the wits, heated by generous wine, take their flight, and people have less regard for appearances. It was not necessary for M. Saint-Godibert's nephew to have drunk champagne in order to be audacious with the ladies, but at this moment he seemed even more enterprising than usual. He looked tenderly at Francine, and said,—

"What, you do not love me?"

"Ha, ha, ha! What an absurd question."

"A very natural one, on the contrary; I have told you that I adore you, it is very just that I should ask some return from you."

"As for me, I didn't ask you to adore me, and I have no return to give you."

"Ah, how cruel you are to treat me thus, I, who have been sighing for you so long."

"Ha! ha! But you are always sighing, it is your profession, you told me so once. Sometimes I think that you envelop me in a general sigh."

"How wicked you are to mock at a love so true, so tender."

"Oh, but do be silent, I beg of you, what would any one think of me if they should hear you?"

"All these people are occupied among themselves and not with us."

"And my husband, who is over there, he would kill me and you, too, if he knew what was the subject of our conversation."

"Your husband, I shall tell him that cuckoo equals 'cuculus' in Latin, and he will be delighted with me, and he will invite me to go and see him, and I assure you that I shall profit by the permission."

"No, no, I don't advise you to mention cuckoo to my husband, I don't think that would be the way to make him invite you to our house."

"Will you not give me some hope, then?"

"And what end would that serve?"

"You wish to be faithful to your husband, then?"

"Oh, but what a question, what are you thinking of, M. Frederic?"

"Of you."

"Yes, at this moment, perhaps, but to-morrow? —in an hour?"

"Of you always."

Madame Marmodin seemed moved and, despite her apparent coquetry, to be embarrassed as to how to answer him, but M. Brouillard, who had noticed all that was passing, and who had remarked the animated conversation between Francine and Frederic, softly approached the lady's husband, and taking his arm, said to him,—

"Monsieur Marmodin, didn't your wife have a flower in her hair, I thought I had seen a rose,

but it's not there now, can she have lost her flower?"

M. Marmodin turned and saw the handsome Frederic speaking warmly to his wife, and the latter listening with some emotion; he hurried towards them, saying to M. Brouillard,—

"Yes, yes, you are right, she is going to lose something, there is 'periculum in mora.' I believe it is time I should go to her."

The husband's presence naturally put an end to the conversation of Francine and Frederic. After some words spoken at random to M. Marmodin, on subjects which had no connection with that of which he had treated with that gentleman's wife, Frederic went into another part of the drawing-room to rejoin his cousin and M. Richard, who had arrived, and who was just remarking to the son of the house,—

"The devil, it seems that you have had a good many people here to dinner."

"Why, yes."

"And they invited me for the evening, that's agreeable, to come and see the others digest their dinner."

"Come, my dear fellow, if one must invite all his acquaintances, and the friends and acquaintances of his son, when he gives a dinner, why in place of entertaining them in his house I think it would be necessary to entertain them in the Champ du Mars, or the Place du Carrousel."

"Really, you are growing sarcastic."

"Ah, here's this dear Richard," said Frederic, going to shake the hand of the new-comer. "How do you like this drawing-room? Is it not very handsome? Have you been to my uncle's house since he lived in this apartment? He hasn't lived here quite three months yet, has he, Julien?"

"No, not quite."

"No, I have not been here before," responded M. Richard, "yes, it's magnificent, very elegant; it seems that your uncle is always doing a good business, and that he gives very fine dinners."

"Oh, yes, he is getting on well, and it was I who told him that he ought to receive, entertain; it is very good form. You are not displeased at that, are you, Julien?"

"No, when he does not place me beside Mademoiselle Soufflat, at table."

"Ah, my dear fellow, your father has his plans, one can see that. Come, now, two hundred thousand francs dowry, that's a consideration."

"Would you take that nose with two thousand francs, yourself?"

"Hum, I don't know so much about that, perhaps I should; for, after all, one isn't obliged to look often at his wife's nose, one can look at it crosswise, from the side."

"But I don't want it, I won't take it from any side."

"However, cousin, two hundred thousand

francs is a pretty little sum, I would do a good many things to have it."

"Put yourself in the ranks then, marry Mademoiselle Soufflat."

"Oh, I don't want to embroil myself with my uncle, and then she wouldn't have me, I am not a rich heir."

"Well, gentlemen, what are you discussing," said M. Dernesty, who had also left Clémence because her husband had approached her, and who came to join the three young men. "Oh, good evening, Richard, how goes it?"

"Oh, very well. You have come back from England, then?"

"Yes, I have been back for a fortnight."

"You didn't stay there long."

"A month, five weeks or so. Tell us, fellows, what you were talking about?"

"We were speaking about the nose."

"What do you mean by the nose?"

"Why, Mademoiselle Soufflat's nose,—how do you find it?"

"Magnificent, I have never met its parallel. It's worthy a place in the museum of natural history if the proprietor would only consent to take it off."

"Why, gentlemen, pretty woman are not so common as one would wish to say."

"Nor are they very much sought after on 'change!"

"They don't any of them amount to a great deal."

"There are some of them who amount to a great deal, I assure you."

"Wait, gentlemen," said Richard, "joking aside, there are many ladies here. Can you show me one of them who is perfectly handsome? I defy you to do it!"

"The devil, Richard, you are very hard to please; there are some ladies here who are very handsome; first of all, Madame Mondigo."

"Yes, she is a very good-looking woman on the whole; but she is too pale, too fair; take her features one after the other, and not one of them is irreproachable."

"I should prefer to take them altogether."

"Madame Marmodin is still more pleasing," said Frederic, "I'll wager that there is not one man whom she could not please."

"Pleasing, pretty enough, I grant you, pretty because of her small features, her physiognomy, but she's not a beauty."

"But, apropos of beauty," cried Frederic, "tell me something, Richard, of how you came out with that young girl with whom we travelled on the railroad in returning from Orleans."

"Ah, gentlemen, I confess that she was far above all that we see here; but you saw her also, Julien, it was the young girl who was seated beside you. You ought to remember her."

"Do I remember her," sighed Julien. "Oh, I have not forgotten her, I have always her charming face in my thoughts, what a ravishing face, what a pretty figure, what a modest, respectble appearance. I would have given everything in the world to have seen her again, to have spoken to her."

"Yes," said M. Richard, caressing his chin, "that was what might be called a pretty woman, youth, freshness, height, carriage; she had them all."

"Hang it, gentlemen," said Dernesty, "you have drawn a portrait which piques my curiosity considerably. She was a phœnix, then, this girl, a pearl."

"Yes, really, a pearl of great price."

"And what have you done with this treasure then? — it is not possible that you all three let it escape you."

"Unfortunately I had my father and mother with me," said Julien, sighing, "I was not free to do as I pleased. Oh, if I only had been — but fortune was not kind."

"I," said Frederic, "had been foolish enough to commence an intrigue with a roguish little woman who was seated at my left. I was engaged, there was no way of receding; I had been done all the same, my conquest was nothing but a hairdresser's mistress; you may conceive that I didn't keep her longer than a butterfly — that

poor Irma, who is foolish enough to be in love with me, to follow me incessantly when I go out. I don't know what to do to get rid of her."

"Then," said M. Dernesty, "it must have been Richard who occupied himself with your ravishing acquaintance."

"Yes, gentlemen," said Richard, with a self-satisfied air, "I was my own master, nothing embarrassed me; and I said to myself, this young girl shall be mine, and I was successful."

"Really, Richard! oh, tell us all about it; the young girl had such a virtuous look. How the devil did you manage it?"

"Oh, those airs don't impose on me, and when I swear to possess a woman I always gain my end."

"The devil! That appears to me fabulous. Let us see, Richard; tell us your adventures with the little girl of the railway."

"By Jove, gentlemen, on leaving the station I set myself to follow the little one; then, while walking beside her, I engaged her in conversation. She had come to Paris for the first time, and I offered to act as her guide; after some fuss she accepted. She made me trot about terribly; she was looking for some relations, for some uncles and aunts, I do not know who — some one had given her their addresses,— oh, there was something very singular about that. It was the same address as this house, yes, on coming in

below I recognized the house. In short, I don't know whether it was a story concocted at the moment, or whether some one had given her false addresses, but she did not find the relations for whom she was looking in Paris; then there were tears, anxiety, she did not know what she should do or where she should go in this city, where she knew nobody, and, in addition to this, night was coming on, which complicated the situation. You will understand that my line of conduct was determined on, I consoled, reassured the young woman, telling her to trust herself to me, and saying that I had an aunt who would give her hospitality, and treat her like her own child; she accepted, the more readily because she had not a sou, she had amused herself on the way by giving all the money she possessed to beggars and blind people. I had said to her, however, 'You are wrong, what you are doing is imprudent,' but it was of no use; if she had had one hundred crowns I believe she would have given them, but she had not more than twenty francs."

"Poor little thing! come, finish."

"After reassuring her, I took her to supper at Deffieux's on the Boulevard du Temple, where we did very well."

"She consented to go to supper with you?"

"You may well believe it — with cheerfulness, with great pleasure. We ate for four and drank the same. Oh, I was very well satisfied; a twenty-

five franc supper goes very well. When we left there we were both of us very gay; then I led my little one towards my lodging, but once there she divined the truth, then there were reproaches, hard words, she called me monster, scoundrel, perfidious, but she calmed down after a while, and next morning she called me her darling and angel. I knew well that it would end in that manner."

Young Julien knit his brow while listening to this story, and appeared very vexed to learn that M. Richard had won the pretty traveller.

Frederic shook his head with a doubtful air, muttering,—

"Ah, so things came to that pass, that astonishes me, I had thought better of that little thing."

"According to what I have heard," said Dernesty, "your pearl was not so precious a jewel as you would like to say."

"Why, hang it," cried Richard, "she was a rose, a veritable rose."

"And she consented like that, to sup with you, to go with you?"

"In her situation what do you think she could do better, and then, listen to me, I knew how to please the little girl. You think, gentlemen, that there is nobody like you for making conquests, but others have also their good fortune, others may make their choice, even."

Dernesty turned away, closing one eye, and Frederic answered,—

"Well, what have you done with your conquest, is she still with you?"

Richard thought for a moment what he should say, and decided at last to answer,—

"Faith, gentlemen, if I must confess it to you, as I did not care to keep this young girl with me for propriety's sake, and since it would have embarrassed me, for I like my liberty too well, the third day I left my lodgings early and I did not return until evening; then I found nobody there, my young girl had decamped, she had probably been lonely and had taken her flight, and since then I have not seen her."

Frederic did not seem to put much faith in the ugly man's story. What they had heard seemed to put Julien into a very bad temper, and Dernesty cried, laughing,—

> She was of that world where the most beautiful things
> Have the worst destiny;
> A Rose, she had lived as the roses live,
> The space of a morning.

"Oh, I do not think for one moment that she can be dead, I shall find her again one of these days in some outfitting or novelty shop."

The conversation of the young men soon turned to another subject, somebody had spoken in the drawing-room of having some music, and Mademoiselle Soufflat hastened to place herself at the piano, then a gentleman who had come after dinner, and who had made a great deal of

stir on entering, bowing and flourishing his handkerchief and seating himself, and who had taken care to place himself before a mirror, went into the dining-room to look for an instrument which he had deposited there and which was enveloped in a leather bag. This gentleman played, or, at least, thought he knew how to play, the hautboy, and M. Saint-Godibert walked about the drawing-room, announcing with a radiant air,—

"Gentlemen and ladies, Mademoiselle Soufflat is going to play a piece on the piano, accompanied by the hautboy. M. Bouchon will accompany her, it is he who always accompanies her at parties," and he added in a low tone,—

"That is why I invited him to come this evening, M. Soufflat begged me to."

"That's very flattering for M. Bouchon," said Cousin Brouillard, "That his hautboy should be invited and not himself."

M. Soufflat, the papa, also lounged about the room and always on his tiptoes; he ran from one to the other, saying,—

"You are going to hear my daughter with Bouchon, their playing is perfect, it's exquisite, they understand each other very well, they never play one without the other."

"Then," said M. Brouillard, "this young man is Mademoiselle Soufflat's Bouchon; it's a position which I do not envy."

Mademoiselle Soufflat played a prelude on the

piano; M. Bouchon had put his instrument to his mouth, but he could not produce a sound, and he kept exclaiming,—

"Give me the tone, I haven't got it, it's necessary that I should have the tone, and that I should put myself above it."

Suddenly François, who had come to serve some glasses of eau sucre in the drawing-room, returned, holding a scalloped dish in his hand, and ran and presented it to M. Bouchon, saying to him,—

"Here is some tunny,[1] monsieur, you asked for tunny just now, here it is, put yourself above that if you wish."

The hautboy player was seized with consternation on seeing the hors-d'œuvre which François held out to him. Everybody laughed at the servant's new blunder, and M. Saint-Godibert was obliged to show anger to make the stupid fellow leave the drawing-room, for he absolutely persisted in giving the tunny to M. Bouchon, exclaiming,—

"Monsieur asked for it several times, and why shouldn't he want it now? He doesn't know what he wants, this gentleman."

At length, quiet being restored, Mademoiselle Soufflat played her duet with the hautboy. The piece was applauded loudly by the father of the

[1] François' action was due to the similarity of sound between "ton" tone, and "thon" tunny; the pun is inevitably lost in translating.

young lady, and by Monsieur and Madame Saint-Godibert, but the other persons were all occupied with other things, and Cousin Brouillard said, half aloud,—

"I've heard duets which resembled that very much at the Café des Aveugles."

Then Brouillard, who was near the literary man said to him,—

"Well, cousin, you are going to give us a new play, so they tell me."

"Yes, my dear Brouillard, a great work, a very important work, in three grand acts."

"Do you think that will go well?"

"I have every reason to believe so, it is the unanimous opinion of all those who know my play."

"Come, so much the better, it is likely to go better than the last, then."

"How? What do you mean by that?"

"Well, it seemed to me that your last piece was rather rudely hissed, nobody even heard the end. I remember it, I was there and I was extremely mortified at hearing you hissed like that. I said to myself, I shan't go to any more of his plays for he's not fortunate."

M. Mondigo, who had become purple, replied, forcing himself to hide his anger,—

"My dear cousin, if you had been to the second representation of that same piece that would have made up for the first time, for it went like an

angel raised to the skies, and one could see well that it was only a cabal which had hissed at the first representation."

"Oh, indeed, the second was good, I will go only to your second nights then."

M. Roquet, who up to this time had spoken little, for no one would take any notice of him, and that had offended him, came forward then, saying,—

"But I have noticed, my dear M. Mondigo, that in general the plays at the theatre always go better on the second night, if I were an author it seems to me that I should seek to avoid in some way the tumult of the first night."

"Yes, you would begin by the second," said M. Brouillard, "that would be very adroit."

"Hush, gentlemen, silence," said M. Saint-Godibert, "Mademoiselle Soufflat is going to sing."

"Is she again to be accompanied by Bouchon?" demanded M. Brouillard.

"No, she is going to sing a solo."

Mademoiselle Soufflat sang a ballad, then a love song, then a comic song, she seemed to have decided to sing for the rest of the evening, and her father crept from one to another saying with a delighted expression,—

"Well, I hope she will give us enough of them; when she is once at the piano there is no way of making her leave it, she is indefatigable."

"But we are not," murmured M. Brouillard, "this is very pleasing, I'll go and get my hat then."

However, the company no longer listened to this young lady who persisted in singing. Everyone chatted apart, the four young men who had remained together did not restrain themselves from laughing at the concert which she was giving them, and at M. Soufflat's movements to obtain applause for his daughter. The punch which was circulating and of which they had each taken so many glasses sustained their gayety, and Frederic said to young Julien,—

"See how happy you will be with a wife who sings all day; for you will hear nothing else from morning till night."

"And a father-in-law who always looks as if he were going to dance."

"It is impossible to have a more cheerful family."

Shouts of laughter followed almost without interruption, when M. Cendrillon drew near the four young men, exclaiming,—

"What the devil, you seem to be getting on well here, you are amusing yourselves, you are laughing, I should like very well to do as much, but I cannot, I am not in the mood. Despite myself, the remembrance of that honest old man is incessantly in my mind; the one of whom I spoke to you at dinner, the man with the sixty thousand

francs,— Papa Savenay. Since I learned that M. Saint-Godibert has not seen him I am much troubled about him, it makes me very uneasy; without doubt something must have happened to him, but I shall inform myself, oh, I shall make some inquiries, I must absolutely learn what has become of that poor dear man."

And, in his endeavor to console himself, M. Cendrillon tried to imitate Major Krouteberg, who walked behind the punch bowl and did not fail to seize a glass each time that he found himself beside it. The capitalist swallowed several glasses of punch, one after the other, then he returned to the young men hoping that their gayety would reanimate his own, but the latter had suddenly ceased their laughter since M. Cendrillon had spoken of Papa Savenay; they said nothing more, their conversation had ceased and it seemed as though the great capitalist had communicated his distress to them.

After some moments the ladies took their shawls, their pelisses, their bonnets, and the men sought their capes or their cloaks or their wraps, and each one made himself as unrecognizable as possible.

Mademoiselle Soufflat, perceiving that there was hardly anybody left in the drawing-room to listen to her, decided to abandon the piano and join her father. The Saint-Godiberts accompanied them as far as the staircase and overwhelmed them with

thanks, and M. Bouchon, who was putting his instrument into the case, received a gracious smile and shake of the hand from M. Saint-Godibert and his wife, accompanied by these words,—

"Monsieur, you will afford us great pleasure by coming to accompany Mademoiselle Soufflat always when she cares to come to our house and give us some music."

M. Bouchon, to whom they had offered not even a glass of punch or a cake, and who had expected to be treated better than that, made a rather formal bow and departed, vowing that he would not go there again.

Cousin Brouillard, who always found a way of remaining for two hours in the antechamber, looking for his old overcoat, which had served him for over ten years, was the last to go, saying,—

"Good evening, cousins, another time try to have François make fewer blunders; I had much rather pay a servant higher wages than that he should commit these domestic awkwardnesses."

CHAPTER III

The Potter's Shop

We left Rose-Marie on Désiré Glureau's arm, departing with him from the "Wet Foot Café" and its customers. The inspector of sweeping, uncouth and ignorant as he was, gave his support with a certain gallant respect to the young girl whom he had undertaken to protect. A chivalrous glow warmed his heart; he felt proud that he had become the guardian of so pretty and dainty a person, and proud also of the confidence which she had placed in him. Despite his wretched costume, his ridiculous hat and his lack of stockings and pocket handkerchiefs, the worthy fellow would not have thought of abusing her trust and confidence for an instant.

But while walking slowly along with her new protector, poor Rose-Marie trembled with cold, her teeth chattered, shivers ran through all her limbs, and it seemed to the poor child, who had left her home so well and strong only a few hours before, that her strength would soon fail her utterly. However, they were only at the end of September, and the weather was not yet cold.

"Lean on me, mamzelle," said the man with

the Cossack's head, turning towards the young girl, "it seems to me that you are shivering."

"In fact, monsieur, I am very cold, I don't know why."

"Oh, I know very well, it's from having slept like that in the open air in the street, and on a stone bench; that is not healthy, above all, when one is not used to it, and one can see well by your appearance that you were not made for that."

"Oh, no, monsieur, at my father's house I slept so comfortably in my pretty little chamber."

"Why, then, did you leave your father?"

"Why, monsieur? it was he who wished that I should come to Paris to stay with my uncles, who are very rich. He believed that I should be happier here than in our village. But yesterday I could not find my uncles' dwellings, although somebody had given me their addresses, then I was much embarrassed, night was coming on, and I did not know Paris, for it was the first time that I had come here. There was a gentleman who had followed me for a long time and who had also been with us in the railway carriage."

"Ah, which one?"

"I believe it was the one who was seated beside you."

"The one who prevented me from taking some snuff, then; oh, I had a great desire to give him a drubbing in the carriage, if we had been alone

I swear to you that he would have received it. Well, what of this gentleman?"

"He offered me his arm, he offered to conduct me to the house of one of his aunts, who would have kept me until the next day. At first I would not go, for the young man did not inspire me with any confidence, but I did not know what would become of me, it was late, I was overwhelmed with fatigue, for I had already walked a good deal about Paris."

"O mercy, Paris is big, oh, very big, and then when one doesn't know it one often goes farther than is necessary; continue, mamzelle."

"Are we nearly there, my knees are bending under me."

"Yes, mamzelle, yes, lean on me, don't be afraid; I don't look like it, but I am solid."

"Well, I accepted this gentleman's offer of help, then he took me first to a restaurant, saying that he had not dined."

"Oh, as to that, one may be hungry, that's not forbidden."

"I didn't wish to take anything. The gentleman ate for a very long time, then, when he had finished his supper, I easily saw by his eyes and his walk that he was tipsy."

"Ah, that was ill done, to get tipsy; between men it's allowable, one may do so, but when one is with ladies it's unmanly. Although I don't carry a handkerchief, I shouldn't have done like that."

"When we came out of the restaurant, this young man made unworthy proposals, he wished to kiss me. I saw that he had tried to abuse my good faith, and I repulsed him, disengaged myself from his hands and escaped. I ran haphazard, not knowing where I was going, then I wandered in the streets for a long time; at last, overcome by fatigue, I threw myself on the bench where you found me."

"Poor young lady! See that scoundrel of a coxcomb who prevented me from taking a pinch of snuff, who looked as if he despised me, and he tried to abuse you. The ugliest of the ugly, at that. I'm not handsome, oh, I know very well that I'm not handsome, I look like a Cossack, it's true; but him, the low snob, I don't know what he looks like, he's a caterpillar, and a very ugly caterpillar, too. Well, mademoiselle, console yourself, I'm taking you to Bichat's house, he's my comrade who sells pottery, with his wife — and pots and old china; they are fine people, oh, I know them very well, they are not capable of hurting a fly. They are not rich, but they can lodge you for some hours, and then I did not think that it would be prudent to leave you with those jolly fellows down there, the customers of the 'Wet Foot Café,' — that M. Féroce, who said that you should go with him because he had found you at first, and others who had eyes like cats watching a bird. I thought that I should do well to bring you away."

"Oh, yes, monsieur, yes, thank you again, but are we nearly there? I am afraid I cannot walk any farther."

"Here we are, a little obscure shop down there in the Rue de la Huchette, where we now are, very near the Rue de la Vieille-Bouclerie. If you can't walk I shall carry you."

"Oh, I can walk, monsieur, I can go as far as that."

Rose's conductor stopped, they had arrived in front of a little pottery shop which looked like a cellar, and in which one could hardly see clearly, although the door and the window were constantly open. In the space of ten feet square or thereabouts there was a counter, some crates and a considerable stock of vases, pots, dishes, stoves, and cooking utensils of all sizes, one hardly knew where to put his foot in this retreat which was lined with pottery as a bower is adorned with flowers. Within the shop was a little man about forty years old, stout and a little hunchbacked, with a face that looked as though it had been molded on a Punch's mask; the nose and chin nearly met, the cheek bones were very prominent and embellished with a patch of deep red color, and with all this he had a sprightly dapper look, he was cheerful, a good fellow when near the fair sex, and possessed of a gallantry which had never been denied. There was also a woman of fifty years of age, ugly, thin, but with a tender and sentimental air,

who always wore her hair in long ringlets which hung down on her neck. Such was the Bichat couple.

Behind the shop filled with pots was a low room, which served the Bichats at once as bedroom, kitchen, and shop; for in this room could be seen a bed, enclosed by curtains, and a bureau. What remained of room was occupied by pottery, but here it served also as furniture; thus several jars with covers took the place of chairs, and some pots turned upside down represented little benches; in the big earthen pipkins they had put linen and divers articles of clothing, and some cups served as carafes, glasses, bottles, inkstands, oil flasks and snuff boxes,

M. Bichat was about to open his shop, and still had on his head a cotton nightcap, over which he wore a madras handkerchief, and he was enveloped in a kind of short morning jacket, too short to be a dressing gown, and too long for a vest; he was carrying some firepots, some porringers and other vessels to his door, when the button-maker stopped before him, crying,—

"Hallo, my friend, here I am, I have brought some one, mate, and I am glad that you are up."

"Why, it's Glureau, what, are you here? Haven't you got to work yet? Why, with a young girl, too, on your arm. Oh, you scamp of a Glureau, hardly have you arrived in Paris when you become acquainted with a little girl."

"No, no, oh, well, yes — do you suppose I am dreaming of anything like that — but see, Bichat, the most important thing is to let this young lady rest; she is trembling, she is cold, I am afraid she is going to be ill. Is your wife up yet?"

"Not yet, I am always up the first, to open the shop. Mon Dieu, where can we put your acquaintance — it's all right, come in, mamzelle, Bichat is not the one to leave a lady outside his establishment."

The button-maker supported Rose-Marie, and aided by his friend he almost carried her behind the counter, for he felt that the young girl would not be comfortable seated on a jar. Poor Rose allowed herself to be led, carried — she trembled, she shivered, she had no longer the strength to keep up.

Madame Bichat, who had been awakened and was arranging the false ringlets which adorned her head, sat down on seeing that they were bringing a young girl into her room, and in her uneasiness turned her wig so that her ringlets fell over her nose, as she exclaimed,—

"What is this that I see, they are bringing a woman here. What does this mean, M. Bichat? When you believed me asleep did you have the audacity to introduce your concubine here?"

"No, Clara, no, pardon me, my ducky, there's no question of that, it's my mate, Glureau, who

begs us to give shelter to this young girl. You need disturb yourself about nothing; rearrange your curls, they are falling over your nose."

"That's all right; it's no question of my corkscrews; but I know you, M. Bichat, your gallantry causes me a good deal of mortification."

"She is always as jealous as a hare," murmured M. Bichat, turning towards his friend, "when I am amiable in serving a lady she makes scenes for me; but so much the worse, it's not my fault, I am obliged to be pleasant to beauty, it's natural to me."

"Mon Dieu, madame," murmured Rose, trying to rise, "if I cause you any trouble, if my presence here is disagreeable to you, I will go, although I can scarcely walk. Ah, how much I should like to get back to my father in our village."

The button-maker hastened to make her sit down, then he related to the Bichat couple the whole story of the young girl and the manner in which she had been found by M. Féroce, asleep near the "Wet Foot Café." Despite his Cossack's face, Désiré Glureau had an enthusiasm, a warmth when he was interested in anyone; he had interspersed his narration with oaths and exclamations, which heightened its effect, and when he had finished speaking Madame Bichat jumped from her bed, at the risk of showing not her form but her bones, and ran to take Rose's hand, exclaiming,—

" Poor young girl, poor little one, all night in the street and not knowing where to sleep, and this ugly villain who wished to pervert you, to carry you away with him, to profit by your unfortunate position, to ruin you; oh, what scoundrels men are! he must be a rhinoceros! M. Bichat, see where undue love for the fair sex leads men, it makes them think only of seducing, of deceiving these poor women."

M. Bichat hid his face with a porringer, which served him as a fan, as he answered,—

" Ah, that's the way she goes on, jeering at me, throwing stones in my yard because I happen to be amiable with the ladies, as if a shopkeeper, a man of business, shouldn't always please his customers."

" My friends, that's nothing to do with it; it's not a question of family discussions. Here is a protégé I have brought to your house, because we must not leave a virtuous young girl in the street. You will take care of mamzelle? I must be on the wing, it is day, it is the moment when I ought to commence my new duties; if I fail the first time I may lose my new place, and that will not enable me to buy myself some pocket-handkerchiefs. Good-by, I am going to my work, I shall come and see you again soon. I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again, mamzelle, I leave you with these honest people who will not abandon you, I am easy about you. All right, all

right! I see that you want to thank me, but what I have done is not worth the trouble."

So saying, Désiré Glureau shook his friend's hand and quickly left the shop, stumbling over a pipkin and a jar.

"He has broken the handle of that pipkin," said Bichat, in consternation.

"That's four articles he has broken for us since yesterday," answered the potter's wife, dressing herself, "if he comes here often he will ruin us, although he is a good fellow; but he will destroy our stock."

"Where are we going to put mademoiselle?" said Bichat. "Look how pale she is, the poor young girl."

"Yes, yes, that's what I was thinking," said madame. "Bichat, go first of all to the milkman's on the corner and get some cream in addition to our usual quantity, that will be for mademoiselle; I shall make it hot and put with it two sous worth of moist sugar, to be taken almost boiling, that will be like velvet on her stomach."

"I'll go, wife."

"And don't chat with the milkwoman and the servants of the neighborhood, as you have a horrible habit of doing, or I will go and cite all these worthless jades before the justice of the peace, for drawing a married man from the right road."

"Oh, cruel! how very cruel you are!" and M. Bichat took a porringer and a little pot, and

smiling at his wife he went into the street, pretending to play the castanets with his pots and his porringer.

Madame Bichat, having finished dressing herself, set herself to pomading her long English curls, and while doing her hair she looked attentively at the young girl who was seated half conscious in an easy chair. The tender Clara was not a bad woman, she was obliging and had a good heart, but the love which she experienced for her husband rendered her jealous to an excess, and Rose-Marie's beauty had given her the most lively uneasiness.

She would not have thought of sending away the pretty girl who knew not where to go, but she would have been well pleased if Rose could have found a comfortable shelter under some other roof than her own.

At this moment some one came into the pottery shop. It was a man of sixty and some years, of middle height, and possessing ample proportions. His round and red face, his fresh skin, his lively eyes, his air of good-humor lent to his aspect something which predisposed one immediately in his favor. It was the fine face of an old man, on which still shone the health and gayety of a young man of twenty-five years. Not of a young man who is sad and valetudinarian, but of a young man who is gay and well. This newcomer wore a jacket of gray cloth, with buttons

of bright metal, and long tails which made it almost a coat, wide pantaloons of gray cloth, thick, nailed shoes, and on his head a low-crowned broad-brimmed hat.

This personage came into the shop, singing in a low clear voice,—

Oh, no, no, no,
That is not Lizette,
Oh, no, no, no,
That is not Lison!

But he interrupted his song, to exclaim,—

"Hallo, Madame Bichat, I must have a little pot for my milk, I broke mine Saturday, I must replace my little pitcher which I have broken; happily, it is not a great misfortune, it only cost me five sous."

"Oh, it's the neighbor of the fifth floor, that honest M. Savenay," said Madame Bichat, passing into the shop.

"How's your health, this morning, Papa Savenay?"

"Very good, Madame Bichat, oh, I am never sick, thanks be to Heaven."

"And you are always gay, neighbor, always in a good-humor; you've hardly been two months in the house, but you enliven it from morning till night; if all the lodgers resembled you, it would be a great deal more agreeable. Every time that I hear some one singing in the court I say, that's M. Savenay, he's coming in or going

out, but I am always sure that it's you. I recognize your falsetto, and then, besides, you are always humming Béranger's airs. Bichat often says it seems our neighbor loves that poet's songs very much."

"Yes, neighbor, and I believe I have that in common with a good many people. I should like to know all his songs by heart; but, mercy! at my age one does not learn very easily. That's all right; when one has good health, it seems to me that that is the principal thing, and that one can make light of the rest. That is my disposition, Madame Bichat, and it's very fortunate that it is so, for if I had been a man to vex myself over the misfortunes which fate sends to one I should have had enough to torment me, to grieve me; but I always say to myself, 'Of what use is it to be sad?—will it change my position?—will it restore me that which I have lost? Why, then, let us take things as the good God sends them to us; he knows better than we what he is doing, and that which appears to us at first a misfortune sometimes becomes in the end the cause of our happiness.' With such ideas as these and the best of good health, one is always in good-humor, Madame Bichat, and I am going to choose a little pot for myself."

"Well, neighbor, see that you choose the best."

"I should like a nice one, something that costs from four to six sous."

While Papa Savenay was examining different little pots, and while the shopkeeper was eulogizing each one of them, Rose-Marie uttered a kind of groan and turned on the old armchair.

"Why, your husband is there, he is, perhaps, still in bed, the idle fellow," said the old man.

"No, it's not my husband, neighbor, it is a young girl whom some one brought to us, who has been recommended to our pity; a poor child who arrived in Paris only yesterday, where she believed she should find some relatives. It seems that they gave her false addresses; she could find nobody, and she passed the night in the streets and this morning she is all shivery. A friend of Bichat's picked her up and brought her here, this poor little thing; she wanted to leave Paris and go back to her father's house, but I am afraid she has not the strength to do it. On the other hand, to keep her here with us is very embarrassing, our lodging is so small. This young girl cannot go to bed in the same chamber as Bichat, decency and the convenances forbid it. Good heavens! whatever am I going to do? I can't send away a young girl who looks so virtuous, but I don't wish that my husband should undress himself and go to bed before her. I am in a very perplexing position, neighbor, and that rascal of a Bichat hasn't come back yet. It's more than a quarter of an hour since he went out to go and get our milk at the milkshop, not two steps off,

but I am sure that he will play the gallant with all the maids of the neighbors. Oh, what torture to have a pleasing man for a husband. Neighbor, if that were to do over again I would marry a blockhead ; I should be more easy then."

" Don't make bad blood, neighbor, the milk-dealer has so many people to wait upon in the morning, and your husband has to await his turn. But what you tell me about this young girl interests me. Do let me see her. I know a little about medicine, for in the country one must know a little of everything, and when I was employed by my ironmaster in the neighborhood of Nemours, it was always I who ordered the herb teas for the workmen to take when they were ill, for we had not a doctor there right at hand to drug us. I'll go and see if this poor child is in a fit state to resume her journey today."

" Come, neighbor, you are going to see a very pretty person. I was pretty myself at twenty years, but this young girl would have been a dangerous rival."

CHAPTER IV

The Old Man and the Young Girl

This charming old man, whom everybody called "Good Papa Savenay," followed Madame Bichat into the back part of the shop, the living room, if so it might be called, and soon stood before the armchair in which the beautiful Rose was seated, with her pale face sunk upon her breast. She appeared to be drowsy, stupefied, barely conscious, and the nervous trembling which convulsed her whole frame seemed to indicate severe illness, rather than to be the result of even such severe fatigue as that to which she had been subjected during the past night.

The old man examined the young girl, he felt her pulse, he took her hand. Rose allowed him to do so, appearing to be unconscious of what was transpiring around her.

"This young lady is in an alarming condition," said Papa Savenay, "she is in a galloping fever. Oh, the devil, she must go to bed immediately, poor girl. It is impossible that she should resume her travelling for some days, it may be weeks even; she is not now in a fit state to stand upon her feet."

"Oh, my God! that's exactly how it seemed to me. What is to be done about it? Shall I put her in our bed? If I were alone that would be all right, I could sleep anywhere — in a pot, but Bichat,— where can I put him? and to send this young girl into a hospital, that would be very vexatious; and that rascal of a Bichat hasn't come back yet. Ah, here he is."

The potter came in, holding his pitcher and porringer full of milk. His wife went to him and shook him by the arm.

"Twenty-five minutes to go to the corner of the street, not ten steps away, I looked at the sundial when you went out, twenty-five minutes,— you are a virtuous man, aren't you?"

"Take care, Clara, you'll make me upset the cream."

"Oh, yes, you and your cream! we weren't talking about that, libertine. Twenty-five minutes."

"As if anybody could tell the time by a sundial."

"Oh, yes, monsieur, I can tell it very well indeed. How many broad jokes have you uttered since you went out from here, hey?"

"I was waiting, the milkwoman was serving the grocer's new maid, a Picarde, who hasn't been in service long."

"Oh, so you noticed the grocer's Picarde."

"Ah, good day, Neighbor Savenay, and how is your health, always flourishing?"

"Thank you, Monsieur Bichat, very good, but here is a young girl who is not the same, poor child. She is interesting, her costume shows one that she lives in the country,—some one in easy circumstances. And you don't know where her relations are, here?"

"Why, we don't even know who she is herself, do we Clara?"

"Hold your tongue, butterfly, I'll give it to you with your Picardes, wait till I catch you at it!"

So saying Madame Bichat passed behind her husband and pinched his arm; the latter then spilled a part of the milk which he was carrying, and exclaimed,—

"You're always making me black and blue, Clara, you abuse my good-nature, take care that I don't turn some day. You are looking at this young girl, neighbor? It was my mate Glureau who found her sleeping on a stone bench in the street. Doesn't she resemble the crouching Venus?"

"And pray where have you seen crouching Venuses?" said Madame Bichat, relieving her husband of the two vessels containing the milk. "Was it in the city? — was it when you go to prowl about the Quai aux Fleurs under the pretext of buying me a pot of pansies? That's very pretty, to look at a woman when she's crouching; fie, for shame! one should turn his eyes away and not stop before that."

"Clara, I was speaking of a statue, a bust after the antique."

"As for you, if you had the means you would like to have a seraglio of women, but come, monsieur, let us see what we can do with this young woman whom our friend has brought to us; our neighbor says that she is very ill, and he knows something about it; in his country he had charge of a forge. To send her to the hospital would break my heart, to keep her, ill as she is, at our house, that does not seem to me possible."

"Give her our bed, you can sleep beside her, I can sleep underneath."

"No, monsieur, no, you won't sleep underneath that young woman, hum, you'd be playing the somnambulist in the night, sybarite."

"My neighbors," said Papa Savenay, "you are too closely lodged to be able to keep this young woman with you, and I also feel that it would be very distressing to send her to a hospital, one can see very well that that is not the place for her; but there is another way of managing it. When I rented the sixth floor in this house it was necessary that I should take what they had vacant there; it was a little roomy for me alone, but I could not find anything else, and I wanted to lodge in this neighborhood, hoping by good fortune to find some employment here. I have therefore two very fine rooms and a little

entrance up there. I only occupy one of the two chambers and I can yield the other to this young girl; or, rather, I can give her mine and I will make myself a little bed in the empty one. These two rooms have each a door opening into the little entrance, and, consequently, each one of them is shut off from the other. Besides at my age I don't think anyone can have evil thoughts on seeing me receive into my apartments some one who is ill. And then Madame Bichat will be very willing to come and see her often, for my work you know takes me outdoors all day and a part of the evening."

"Will I go and take care of this little thing?" cried Madame Bichat, "O my good neighbor, to be sure I will go. Oh, how good you are, Papa Savenay! but that will disturb you, put you out."

"Not at all, it will give me pleasure, on the contrary. I, who have lived in the country, find myself comfortable anywhere."

"Oh, they are quite right to say in this neighborhood that you are of the best stuff that men are made of."

"Now we must see what we can do for this young girl, we will carry her up in the armchair between us two, neighbor. We must not leave her here any longer."

"And I," said Madame Bichat, "I will go up also to prepare the bed, and get the young thing into it, for that's not a man's business. Bichat,

you tell the pork butcher to have an eye on our shop."

The potter's wife was delighted that their old neighbor was anxious to lend his chamber to the pretty unknown. Papa Savenay gave her the key, and she briskly mounted the five stories, while her husband and the honest man, who, despite his sixty-eight years, was still robust and strong, raised the armchair on which Rose-Marie was extended and gently bore her to the highest story of the house.

Shortly after, Rose-Marie found herself in a small, modestly furnished room, which was, however, very neat and orderly. Madame Bichat had called in a neighbor to her assistance, and had sent away the two men that she might put the young girl to bed, who let them do as they would and had not strength to utter even a word.

"She has a galloping fever," said the potter's wife, as she went to call Papa Savenay in the neighboring room. "She let us undress her, lift her, and put her in bed, without breathing a word; one would almost say that she was unconscious."

Papa Savenay went to Rose-Marie's bedside, he ordered some herb tea, which Madame Bichat said she would make; a woman who lived opposite promised to remain near the sick girl when the potter's wife could not come up, and the old man said,—

"Now, my good people, we have each done

our best, we must hope that Providence will come to our aid and do a little something also; if this young girl should become worse, oh, well, I still have some savings and they shall go for medicine, but with rest and care and excellent herb tea, such as I have ordered, I hope that we shall pull her through."

Then the old man went about his business, the potter went down to his shop, and Madame Bichat went out to buy what was necessary for the herb tea for the sick girl; for since she was no longer afraid of seeing her husband go to bed in the same room with the young girl, the jealous Clara felt a great interest in her and showed much zeal in taking care of her.

M. Bichat proposed several times to his wife that he should go up to the fifth floor and help her in the care that she was bestowing on the young invalid, but Madame Bichat answered her husband,—

"There is no need of you, it's useless for you to go and stick your nose in where this young girl is. Remain among the pots, and if help is needed there are others in the house who have also offered their services to me, but a man should not act as nurse to a person of the other sex."

Papa Savenay was employed in a wholesale perfumer's shop, he kept the books, and did not leave them until four o'clock, to go to dinner, after which he returned and worked until nine

o'clock. The house where he was employed was situated on the Rue Saint-Andre-des-Arts, at a little distance from his dwelling, so instead of going at four o'clock to dine in one of the modest restaurants which abound in that quarter, the good old man returned to his lodging to obtain news of the invalid.

Rose-Marie was attacked by a violent fever and her incoherent speech announced that she was not in full possession of her faculties.

In the phrases which escaped her she pronounced the name of Jerome often, and she called upon her father for help, believing herself still pursued by the young man who had wished to take her to his house.

Madame Bichat was there, near the invalid, with two other neighbors, who were lamenting over the state of the young girl, and saying,—

"Poor child, how unfortunate it would be if she were to die, to have no knowledge of her parents, of her country, to be unable to warn anybody, and at this moment, perhaps, they are crying for her or believe her happy in Paris. It's very imprudent to let a young girl travel alone."

On arriving at home, Papa Savenay hastened to the invalid's room, he took her hand, felt her pulse, and shook his head, murmuring,—

"That this should have happened. A high fever, delirium, this young girl has experienced violent emotion, has been tried beyond her

strength, but at her age one should triumph over illness, one should get well; she will, perhaps, be long ill, but we shall save her."

Then, on passing into the other room of his lodging, the good man saw a bed which they had made up for him on a folding bedstead with a sacking bottom, and he exclaimed,—

"What have we here?—where did this bed come from? I had no need of it, I should have slept well enough on the floor on a mattress."

"Yes," said Madame Bichat, "and do you think that we are going to let you sleep like that, for you to become ill also; oh, no, indeed. Besides, do you suppose that no one is pleased to assist in the good action which you are doing, that no one else has a heart. I have lent the mattress, the clothes; madame the folding bed; the neighbor from below, a counterpane, a pillow;—and then we can watch the invalid, each in turn. Bichat wanted to come up with his mate, Glureau, who has come home, but I said to them, 'You are too young men to see that little thing in her bed, but I will give you news of her.' That was how I managed all that, Papa Savenay."

"That is good, Madame Bichat," responded the old man, "humanity from women does not astonish me, I knew well that you would have pity upon this poor child; oh, hang it, if they hadn't robbed me I should be rich, more at my

ease, at least, and I could pay a nurse to watch her, but what's done is done, and there is no need to go over it again. We must watch her ourselves. I am going to dinner — for it is necessary that those who are not ill should keep up their strength for those who have need of them, after that I will go back to my business and I will return as soon as possible."

"Papa Savenay has been robbed, then, has he?" said a neighbor to the potter's wife, when the good man had gone.

"Yes, it appears that he was attacked in a forest, and that they took a big sum from him, sixty thousand francs, according to what he said, and that has embarrassed him a good deal."

"Sixty thousand francs from Papa Savenay, ah, pshaw, and where should he have got such a sum as that?"

"Ah, mercy, I don't know! Still, it is possible that he inflated the sum a little."

"At first when anybody has been robbed they always say it's of more than they had."

"To render the misfortune more interesting."

"They perhaps stole six hundred francs from him, neighbor."

"Yes, and perhaps not so much; but all the same he is an honest man, very obliging and very helpful."

"And always gay and in a good-humor."

"Which proves that nobody has robbed him of

sixty thousand francs, for then would it be credible that he should still be as gay as he is?"

"No, that would be physically impossible; as for me, if anybody took only sixty francs, I am sure that I should have a jaundice from which I should never be cured."

Papa Savenay spoke very rarely of the incident which had deprived him of his fortune, and the conversation of his neighbors proved that he was right. The world in general accords little credence to the misfortunes of others. People believe that those who have been the victim of a thief, or whose confidence has been abused, largely augment the sum which they have lost in order to excite more interest; and as, in fact, this tactic has often been employed, it follows that those who tell the truth are not believed any more than those who lie.

Evening brought the old man to the young girl, for whom he already experienced the most lively interest. No change had yet taken place in the invalid's condition. One of the neighbors proposed to pass the night in watching her, but Papa Savenay said,—

"Don't tire yourself yet, when there is no necessity for it; I am used to sleeping little. At Nemours I went to bed late, for after chatting with some friends I would read or work, then at the break of day in summer or five o'clock in winter I was up and about. It's perhaps to that rule

that I owe my good health; but I am going to watch now until midnight strikes, then at four o'clock in the morning I shall be up again and take my place beside this child; after that, at six or seven o'clock, it will be time enough to come and replace me."

The neighbors and Madame Bichat yielded to the good man's reasoning, and retired, all promising to return in the morning to learn how the young girl had passed the night. When they had gone, Papa Savenay said to himself,—

"I shall not go to bed at all, and I shall watch all night beside this poor child, but if I had said to the neighbors that such was my intention they would not have left me to take this care, they would have watched this evening, to-morrow, again, but later on their zeal would have been exhausted perhaps. It's much better, then, to spare them, for I fear that this young girl will long have need of them. There are so many people who are sensitive, humane at times, by fits, but with whom good feeling is extinguished as quickly as it is lighted."

The old man put on a small table a little, very thick, very compact book, which he seemed to regard with affection; he murmured softly,—

"Happily they did not rob me of that, I should have felt the loss very deeply. I know I can procure a similar one, but that's all right, I like that one, it was given to me by that old cousin who

left me his money, and as it is all that is left me of his legacy, it is very right that I should stick to this little volume, and, besides, I love the contents so much," and Papa Savenay, drew an old wooden armchair near the table on which the lamp was burning, at some little distance from the bed; he took care that the light should not fall on the invalid's face, and after stirring the fire on the hearth and looking to see if the herb tea was warm, he settled himself in the armchair, opened his little book, and softly, very softly, and in such a manner that no one could hear more than a little thread of voice, almost imperceptible, he set himself to hum, "The Stars which Fall," for it was a collection of Béranger's songs which he held in his hand. The works of the illustrious ballad writer were treasures for Papa Savenay, who, endowed with a happy disposition, had always loved to sing, and age had only strengthened this penchant which sustained his good-humor.

It was an original and at the same time touching scene. To see this young girl watched by an old man whose gray head, nearly bald, denoted health and kindness and good-humor, and then to hear the old man murmuring in a low voice, clear and sweet,—

'Tis when a mortal dies, my boy,
His star that moment falls to earth.—
Among some friends inspired with joy,
Who drink the while they sing with mirth —

and Papa Savenay stopped, he stretched his neck to look at the invalid and assure himself that she wanted nothing, then he said,—

"There are some people who would perhaps think it very wrong that I should hum songs near one who is ill, but I don't know where the harm is; if I were unwell it seems to me that I should much rather be nursed by some one who was cheerful than by a sad person, for the sadness of those who are nursing us must sometimes make us think that we are dangerously ill, and one can't cure people by giving them such ideas as that; however, if this little one were in danger I feel sure that I could not sing, but this delirium is caused by fever, and fever by fatigue; rest and care will soon cause that to pass." And the good man reopened his book and resumed in his little falsetto —

Still another star is falling;
It falls! It falls, and disappears!

and after this song Papa Savenay hummed another; for if, by chance, yielding to the slumber which overpowered him, the old man closed his eyes for a moment it was not long before he opened them again, and, after examining his invalid, set himself to hum his ballads, and seemed to sing with new pleasure. Day brought the neighbors and Madame Bichat, who did not suspect that the good Savenay had watched all night near the invalid, and who took his place beside

Rose. This day passed like the preceding, without bringing about any change in the young girl's state. Papa Savenay still watched, trying to keep slumber from his eyelids by learning by heart Béranger's songs, and said from time to time,—

"It is not possible that Heaven will not restore the health of this young girl, who is so pleasing, who seems so virtuous, and who in her delirium is constantly calling on her father; but that poor father! what a misfortune to have no indication as to who he is, no intimation by which we could discover him and tell him to come to his daughter, for I am certain she would recognize his voice, and the happiness that she would experience in learning that her father was near her would contribute, no doubt, towards the restoration of her health."

The day following, Rose-Marie seemed very ill, her delirium was augmented, her fever more violent, her chest more oppressed; Papa Savenay would no longer trust to his own knowledge, he went himself to seek a doctor and brought him to the young invalid.

The doctor examined the young girl and approved nearly all that the old man had ordered, and after prescribing a new potion, said,—

"It is necessary that this fever should have its course; until the ninth day I can say nothing, but then we must hope that there will be a salutary crisis, and that the youth of the invalid will then

triumph over the malady which has declared itself."

"But if she should die," cried Madame Bichat, when the doctor had departed, "we won't even know what name to say. Friend Glureau perhaps knows it."

"The first time you see that man," said Savenay, "make him come up, neighbor. I will speak to him, we will try, by what he tells us, to discover something about this young girl."

The inspector of sweeping did not fail to come every day to inform himself as to the health of the one whom he called his protégé, and the potter could only tell him what he had learned from his wife, who would not yet allow him to go and see the young girl in her bed. But the disquieting state of Rose-Marie would not permit Madame Bichat to think of her jealousy, and she told her husband to send Glureau up to her neighbor's directly he came in.

The gallant potter had seized this occasion to go and see the invalid also, and he was not slow about going up with his mate to Papa Savenay's, who was then at home with all the neighboring women; the man with the Cossack's face went to look at the invalid and heaved a big sigh, exclaiming,—

"My God! how she is changed already! and she looked so pretty, so fresh, when I first saw her coming into the carriage, there was a general

cry, an exclamation of admiration, the men hadn't eyes enough to look at her! now her color has disappeared, and her eyes are hollow and surrounded by a dark circle, and her lips pale."

"Despite that, one can still see that she is very pretty," murmured Bichat, thrusting in his head, but his wife pulled him by the tail of his frock coat, and made him retire to the back of the chamber, saying,—

"Your reflection is very queer, monsieur; return to your pots, that will be much better than making indecent remarks."

Papa Savenay approached the former button-maker, and said to him,—

"Monsieur, it will be very important for us to discover the family of this young girl, besides, they must be very uneasy about the poor child; please tell us all you know, so that you may put us on their traces."

"What is it that you want me to tell you?" cried Glureau, "I know nothing at all; wait, this is the whole story, I was in a railway carriage, I came from Orleans, I had one of the handsome places because I couldn't find any other. At Corbeil this young girl got into the carriage with us, she was uncomfortable between a young man and a wheezy old fellow who kept four places to himself, I had a corner and offered it, she refused, that finished it, we did not talk any more. I arrived and went about my business, and did not

occupy myself with this young girl, but the next morning, just before the break of day, I was on the Pont d'Hotel-Dieu, in a café in the open air with some jolly fellows, of whom one, M. Féroce, has already made me pay for dinner for him twice at Petit-Very, Rue de Crussol, in a porter's lodge; in short, it was he who discovered the young girl sleeping on a stone bench. We all went to look at her, and I recognized the young lady I had seen on the railway. The wild fellows, amongst others M. Féroce, wanted to take her away with them, but I saw well that the poor child was afraid, and I brought her to Bichat. That's all I know."

"But on the way, while coming here, didn't she say anything to you?"

"Oh, yes, she said to me, 'I am very cold,' and I said to her 'That's from sleeping in the street; you have been in a draft.'"

"But after that?"

"She said to me, 'I was so comfortable at home, at my father's, but it was he who wished that I should come to Paris to visit my uncles. Someone gave me their addresses, but it seems that they were wrong.'"

"And didn't she tell you her uncles' names?"

"She didn't utter any names,— then she tore up and threw into the street a little paper, I think that the addresses were written on it."

"Oh, too bad, that would perhaps have given us some information."

"A young man had followed her, had wished to take her away, insulted her, the kind of thing that happens to pleasing women who are alone, she had escaped from him, and then, overcome by fatigue, had seated herself on the bench, that's all."

"But upon her, in her pockets, did you find nothing?"

"Nothing except a little purse of net-work, which was empty, a little key, and a white handkerchief marked with an R an M and a G."

"Can we look for her family with such slight clues as that?"

"Come," resumed Papa Savenay, "we must renounce the hope of discovering who this young girl is until she can tell us herself. My friends, you see she has no one but us on whom to rely, no other friends; that should be one reason why we must redouble our care of her, and do all that lies in our power to restore her to health."

Everyone being of the old man's opinion, each one promised to continue to second him in the good work which he had undertaken, and that night a neighbor remained to watch the sick person, and for the first time the good man went sadly to bed without humming a refrain from his dear balladist. The critical period which the doctor had announced was expected by all those who cared for Rose-Marie; the ninth day of her illness arrived, and, in fact, after an access of

more violent delirium the invalid fell into a profound stupor, then she seemed calmer, breathed more freely and a deep slumber succeeded this crisis.

"She is saved," said the doctor when he came to see the young girl, "all danger is past; now with care, quietude, no imprudence, in twelve or fifteen days this poor child will be able to go out."

The doctor's words were received with sincere joy by all those who were there, for everyone was keenly interested in the fate of the young stranger; the more they had done for her the happier they were to feel that what they had done was not useless. The doctor was not mistaken. After sleeping for a long time Rose-Marie opened her eyes, she was calm, she felt better, she looked around her, seeking to remember where she could be, and at that moment she heard with surprise a low, faint voice which sang beside her,—

> You will grow old, O beautiful darling!
> You will grow old, and I shall be no more!

For since they had ceased to tremble for the life of the young girl, Papa Savenay had again taken to singing as he watched, and then, as it was one o'clock in the morning, the honest man was alone by the invalid, seated in his large easy chair, and holding his cherished book in his hand.

The old man's voice was so sweet and so clear that Rose waited until he had finished his song to speak a few words. As soon as he heard her speak, the old man arose and approached the invalid.

"Monsieur, where am I?" murmured Rose.

"Don't be uneasy, my child, we will take care of you, but first of all, how do you feel yourself?"

"Very well, monsieur, only that my head is so weak."

"I should think so, after such a severe illness, but, thanks to Heaven, the danger is past, nothing is necessary now but quiet and rest. Don't be uneasy, we will take good care of you; an honest man brought you to the potter's house, Bichat, whose shop is down below."

"Ah, yes, I think I remember."

"Hush, don't speak. The Bichats are good people, but their shop is so small that they could not keep you there, and as I live in their house I offered them this chamber. I have another one which does for me. They intrusted you to me with confidence; I hope, my child, that my age and my appearance inspire you with the like."

"Oh, monsieur."

"Don't speak. As for that I am not alone in tending you. Madame Bichat comes to see you very often during the day; the neighbors from beside us and below, and, in fact, nearly all who live in this house were willing to take part in this good work. Humanity is not so rare a thing as

some people wish to make out, and I am not among the number of those who find everything is evil. You may rest secure in your position, you are not yet in a fit condition to talk, that would fatigue you, but tomorrow if, as I hope, everything goes well, you will talk a little. For the present you are going to drink a good cup of herb tea and go to sleep again."

Rose-Marie was keenly touched by the interest which the old man evinced for her, and to see that despite his age it was he who watched beside her. She wished to say some words to him in recognition of his kindness, but he signed to her to be silent, and after he had given her a cup of herb tea, and recommended the greatest tranquillity of mind, he settled himself anew in his easy chair, and in a few minutes the young invalid went to sleep again lulled by this refrain,—

A wanderer from his land,
He mourns the while;
Let us give a country,
To the poor exile.

CHAPTER V

Rose Recognizes Papa Savenay

The next morning Rose-Marie already felt much stronger, and related her story to Papa Savenay, to Madame Bichat, and to the kindly neighbors, who were all assembled around her bed, delighted to see this young girl, in whom they had taken so much interest, in a fair way to recovery, and prepared to listen with great curiosity to what she would tell them. When she told them where she lived with her father, and uttered the name of the village of Avon, situated almost in the forest of Fontainebleau, the old man uttered an exclamation; but no one paid any attention to him, because they were wholly taken up; Rose in speaking, the others with listening to the young girl.

When Rose had finished speaking, Madame Bichat exclaimed,—

"Now that we know mademoiselle's name and her father's address, what must we do, Papa Savenay?"

"What must we do," replied the old man, "first of all, we must not allow her to fatigue herself, she has already talked too much for an invalid; later, this evening or tomorrow, I can write to

Monsieur Jerome Gogo, to tell him what has happened to his daughter, to let him know that she is no longer in danger, and give him my address, that he may come and take her away if he has no way of discovering her uncles in Paris. Do you agree with me, my child?"

Rose-Marie answered in a weak voice,—

"If my father receives a letter from an unknown person, or if they tell him that I am not yet strong enough to write to him, he will be very much distressed, he will think that I am very ill, and that they dare not tell him so, and it will cause him much grief. I prefer to wait until I can write to him myself; tomorrow I shall be able to do so, I hope, and then I shall not cause him any useless anxiety."

"That's very thoughtful, my child, wait until you are able to write; besides, your father, no doubt, is not uneasy about you, for having no suspicion of what has happened to you, he certainly thinks that you are with your uncles. As to the latter, I assure you that I shall do all that I can to find them, and for their part all the neighbors will do as much; is it not so, neighbors?"

"Yes, yes," exclaimed all the neighbors, "we will not go into anybody's house without asking them if they know M. Nicolas and M. Eustache Gogo?"

"But will you be so good," requested Rose," as to do a favor for me if I venture to ask it?"

"Speak, what is it my child?" came from all sides.

"I did not start for Paris with nothing but the garments which covered me, I had a trunk containing my effects, for my good father would not allow me to go to my uncles like a poor girl lacking everything; my trunk is large and well filled, I left it at the railway office, telling them my name, so that they should give it to no one except me or some one whom I should send."

"Bichat shall go today and reclaim it, I'll go at once and send him there," said the potter's wife.

"Why should he give himself that trouble," said Papa Savenay, "I can go there on coming from my work."

"Yes, indeed, to tire yourself still further, Papa Savenay, when you have already taken so much trouble. Bichat was made to trot about, he has the legs of a deer, and he shall go there. He is a responsible man, he can give satisfactory references, they will give him the article without difficulty. Oh, I knew very well that a young girl so well dressed as that would not come to Paris with nothing but a dress, a chemise, and a petticoat."

In the afternoon, M. Bichat, aided by his friend Glureau, carried the trunk into Rose-Marie's room, she thanked them for all the trouble they had taken in bringing it to her, and the inspector of sweeping told her how pleased he was

to see her on the road to convalescence. As to Bichat, he was in the act of turning a compliment to the young girl, but he had not time to finish when his wife came running and made him go down into the shop under the pretext that some one was asking for a large pot which she had not the strength to give them.

The strength of the invalid was slow in returning. Two days passed by before her hand could guide a pen, finally, as soon as she could write to her father she informed him in part of what had happened to her in Paris; she ended by telling him of all the kindness which had been lavished upon her in the house where she had been received, and she was careful to give him the address of the good old man with whom she was lodging, and where she awaited news of him.

"Will you have the kindness to put that in the post, it is for my father and I want him to get it as soon as possible."

"Be easy, mamzelle," answered Glureau, "nothing is so easy as to post a letter in Paris, there are posts at every corner of the street, and in a moment it will be there. I should like to have something else to do for you; but as to your uncles Gogo, it is the most astonishing thing, nobody can discover them; there are heaps of Benoits, Bertrands, and Bernards, but there's not the least sign of a Gogo."

All the neighbors said the same. Papa Savenay

himself was not more fortunate in his search, and Madame Bichat ended by saying to her gossips,—

"It's a very singular thing that these uncles Gogo are not to be found, in fact, if that young girl did not seem so virtuous, so good, so honest, one would think that the uncles were a myth, and that it was for something else that she came to Paris."

Since Rose-Marie's health was reëstablished the neighbors had returned to their business, and came much less often to see the young girl. Madame Bichat would not allow her husband to go up to the fifth floor, for as Rose's color came back her beauty returned also, and struck all those who saw it, and the jealous Clara did not wish to expose her husband to so dangerous a temptation. During the remainder of her convalescence the good Savenay was almost her only companion, but he was faithful to her. Directly he had finished his work the old man came to her whom he looked upon as his child, and for whom he experienced the most sincere attachment.

For her part Rose-Marie was keenly touched by the tender care which was lavished upon her by this good old man who had rescued her, and she did not know how to evince her gratitude to him. One evening while the good Savenay was blowing the fire and preparing the herb tea which the young girl was still obliged to take, and

humming between his teeth the refrain of the "Marquis of Carabas," Rose-Marie, who followed the old man with her eyes, said to him with emotion,—

"How good you are, M. Savenay, and how much trouble I give you."

"What do you mean by trouble, my child, to do anything for you is a pleasure, for you are so gentle, so interesting, I look upon you as my child, in the first place."

"And I love you my dear protector, like a second father, but it's very singular, the more I look at you the more it seems to me that your face is known to me, and that before seeing you here I had already seen or met you somewhere."

"As to me, my child, I can't say as much about that, I had never seen you before they brought you to the potter's down below. Had it been so I should easily have recognized your pretty face."

"That's very astonishing, it even seems to me that I can remember your dress. I recognize that jacket of gray cloth with white buttons; but where can I have seen you?—in our village of Avon, or at Fontainebleau, for I go there very often."

"That's not probable, my child, I have never been in the village of Avon, and although I lived at Nemours, which is not far from Fontainebleau, I have never been in that town either, and surely

you cannot have met me there three months back, when I passed through it after the unfortunate event which befel me, for I only stayed a very short time."

"What M. Savenay, did some misfortune happen to you, who are so good, so honest?"

"My dear little girl, if being good and honest were sufficient to cause one to elude the strokes of fate, everybody would conduct themselves well, and there would not be any more wicked people on the earth. One must be honest by preference, by disposition, and not with the idea that one will be in any way recompensed for it. But to return to my adventure, I was going to tell you about that, my child, it will interest you, I have no doubt of it, since it relates to me, and will make the time seem less long."

"Oh, I shall listen to it, M. Savenay, with pleasure."

The old man having made up his fire, seated himself in the easy chair near Rose's bed, and commenced thus,—

"I must say first of all that I am from Nemours, that I am an old bachelor, which is a fault, for as one grows old, one often regrets not having brought up a family, but when it is too late to repair a fault one must put up with it, that's what I have done; thank God, I have never been of a disposition to grieve very long about anything, for example, I had a little trouble in

habituating myself to being called Papa Savenay —"

"And you had never had any children?"

"But now I am so used to it that it seems strange to me when they say just 'Savenay,' but then I had found occupation with an ironmaster in the neighborhood of Nemours, I kept his books, and I believed I should finish my life there. The place was a modest one, but, pshaw, one doesn't need much money to live comfortably in the country. With my health and my cheerfulness, I was the life and soul of the iron works and the neighborhood, but some months ago an unexpected fortune came to me, an old cousin — I say old, but he was hardly older than myself — in short, this cousin died and left me sixty thousand francs."

"Sixty thousand francs," murmured Rose-Marie, who on hearing this sum named was struck anew, and tried to recollect.

"Yes, my child, sixty thousand francs; to me that was a great fortune, and already I said to myself — what shall I do with all that?— it was the embarrassment of riches. I thought even then, that I should sing my favorite refrains less often. At the end of six weeks, the legacy was sent to me, I got the sum from a banker of Nemours, and I went with that to a rich capitalist of our country, M. Cendrillon, — a droll name is it not? but the name has nothing to do with it, he is an

honest man, and not proud, and I asked him for advice. He could not take care of my money, but he advised me to bring it to Paris to a banker for whom he could answer to me, to M. Saint-Godibert, who would pay me the income from it. I thought his advice was good, and I said to myself 'Paris is a very agreeable city, I will pass the winter there, and in the summer I will return to Nemours' — mercy! that would have been the life of a great nobleman. But when one is sixty-eight years old, and is alone in the world, without children, and falls into a fortune, it seems to me that one has a good right to enjoy it, is it not so?"

"Go on, go on, M. Savenay, if you knew how your story interests me."

"Ah, it was an evil genius which inspired all these plans, or rather it was to happen. I gave my notice to the firm, and I gave it even with joy, for I knew that I should be replaced by an honest man, the father of a numerous family, who needed work to bring up his children; but for that event, as they would never have sent me away, he would have had to wait a long time for my place, for I am hearty, and my grandfather lived up to a hundred and one years, — that looks hopeful for me, doesn't it? Ha, ha! —

Though for virtue I'm renowned,
I am but a plain old fellow;
Fiddler of the hamlets round,
Good old wine has made me mellow."

"Your adventure, Monsieur Savenay, your adventure?"

"All right, I am coming to that. After I had given my notice, I sold all my furniture down there, for I said, when I return to the country I will rent a little temporary lodging, that will suffice me. I only kept my horse, Mouton, oh, a fine good beast whom I had already had for nine years, and who had carried me back and forth between Nemours and the foundry. From the sale of my things I received nearly six hundred francs, which I made them give me in gold, so that it would be lighter for me to carry, then, having in my portfolio sixty thousand francs in bank notes and a letter in my pocket to M. Saint-Godibert, from my friend, M. Cendrillon, I fastened my travelling-bag on Mouton, mounted my horse, and took the way for Paris."

"On horseback, you were on horseback?"

"Yes, my child, some persons said to me, 'It's rather imprudent, Papa Savenay, to travel on horseback with such a large sum of money on your person'; but I answered, 'What do you think will happen to me? I shall only travel in broad daylight and in an inhabited district.' Ah, I didn't suspect that even in broad daylight it was not well to pass through the forest, and in trotting on my little horse in the forest of Fontainebleau, I was suddenly stopped by two men who threw themselves upon me, pistol in hand—"

"O my God, that was you, that was you!"

At these words, pronounced so vehemently by the young girl, Papa Savenay raised his head and looked at her in surprise, and said,—

"That was me, how, my child, what do you mean by that?"

"Oh, I knew well that I had seen you before, that your honest, good face had struck me, and this jacket, and your hat with a broad brim, you had that on when in the forest."

"Yes, that is so, but who could have told you?"

"Oh, wait, my good M. Savenay, I promised my father never to speak of that, but to you, that is different, let me tell you that I was in the forest when two men in blouses came towards me."

"Two men, my two robbers?"

"Exactly, from afar I could not see their features, for big caps with visors were worn in such a manner as to hide them, and then the lower part of the face was all blackened."

"Yes, yes, oh, I saw no more than that myself. Then—"

"Although I did not yet know what these men were going to do, I was afraid and I hid myself in a bush."

"Poor little thing."

"They came almost up to me. I heard them say, 'He has sixty thousand francs in a pocket-book, we can easily take it from him!' One of the men was frightened and dared not commit the

crime, but the other at last succeeded in persuading him. I should very willingly have cried for help to save you, but I dared not, ah, forgive me, I think even, that I should not have had the strength."

"O my dear child, you did well to keep silent, those wretches would have killed you if they had known that you witnessed their deed."

"That is what my father said to me. At length you came riding along on your horse, they ran out on you. Ah, if you knew what I suffered then, how I trembled for your life, and how I begged Heaven to deprive these men of the idea of doing you ill."

"Poor child, poor child!"

"Happily they did nothing but rob you, when I saw you going off on your horse, oh, I breathed more freely —"

"And I, too, hang it, I can tell you that I was in a funk — and my robbers?"

"They disappeared immediately. It was long before I dared to come out of my hiding-place; at length, after looking carefully around to see that the two men had gone I went on my way, but I had not taken two steps when my feet stumbled on something, it was a little pistol, very pretty, very rich."

"One of the robbers had let it fall, no doubt."

"I took it and carried it home, my father told me to keep it carefully, and that one day perhaps

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held the [illegible]l in his hand.

Etching by Louis Meynelle.

it would lead to the recognition of the robbers. I have it here; wait, M. Savenay, in my trunk, if you will open it, and at the bottom of the left-hand side you will find it."

Papa Savenay followed the instructions which she gave him and soon held the pistol in his hand, he examined it with curiosity and exclaimed,—

"But this is a very handsome and valuable weapon, hardly the kind for highway robbers."

"Oh, those who stopped you were not ordinary robbers, you didn't notice, then, that they wore varnished boots and fine pantaloons?"

"I noticed nothing, my child, I was so frightened, I was so surprised, I remember nothing, except that a pistol threatened my breast, while some one with a blackened face said to me, 'Your pocket-book, or you are a dead man,' and as to the face, oh, I should be very much embarrassed to identify it."

"I assure you, M. Savenay, that they were young men who spoke like distinguished people, besides they said, 'We are well disguised; these blouses, these caps, and our blackened faces disguise us so well, that no one could ever imagine who we were."

"In fact, my child, the manner in which they treated me makes me believe that they were not in the habit of robbing. After they had taken my pocket-book I was getting ready to hand over

my valise, but not at all, in place of that they whipped my horse; Mouton broke into a fast gallop, and at the end of half an hour I had left the forest."

"What did you do then, monsieur?"

"What did I do then? Hardly had I arrived at Fontainebleau when I went to the mayor of the town and told him what had happened to me; he made a note of my deposition, but when he saw I still had my horse, my valise, my purse full of gold, I saw an expression of doubt steal over his features. He was very much astonished that robbers should content themselves with my pocket-book, which, however, he admitted was of greater value than all the rest. I remember that somebody who was there with him and listened to me, said to me, shaking his head almost mockingly,—

"'Did you not by chance sleep upon your horse, and did you not dream that somebody attacked you?'

"'And my sixty thousand francs,' exclaimed I, 'do you think, sir, that I dreamed that I inherited them?' He had no answer to that, and promised me to make all the inquiries possible, and even to send some gendarmes to beat the forest to try and find there the two wretches who had stopped me. He asked me for a description of them, and I could only say they had blouses with caps, and they presumed that the deed had

been done by two vagabonds, by some one who had escaped from justice. I remained at Fontainebleau until the next day, to rest myself and to recover from the fright which I had experienced, and also to learn if they had had any news of my robbers. But the next day I learned that the gendarmes had found nobody in the forest. Then I reflected as to what I should do. I could have returned to Nemours, related my adventure and demanded my place again from the ironmaster, they would have given it to me, but I said to myself, 'What about this poor man to whom they have given the place, and who is now happy because he has the certainty of being able to bring up his children. Am I going to snatch good fortune from him, to thrust him back into his poverty, his trouble, which will seem still more bitter to him because he has known some days of happiness; my faith, no, I will not do that, I have six hundred francs in hand, I shall go to Paris, perhaps I can find there a little employment, however small it be it will suffice me, and in so doing I shall cause sorrow to nobody.' No sooner said than done. I remounted Mouton and I came to Paris, and see how one is always recompensed when one does well. The first thing after my arrival I found myself seated at a restaurant, where I was breakfasting, near a wholesale perfumer's clerk who had some accounts to audit. I told my story to the clerk, he interested

himself in me, and conducted me to his patron, who gave me a place. He warned me, however, that they would only have need of me for some months, and that after that it would be necessary for me to provide myself otherwise. Still, I accepted, saying to myself that later on I should see. I looked for a lodging near my employer's shop, I rented this one, I sold poor Mouton, oh, that troubled me, it is true, but I had no longer the means to keep a horse; I bought some furniture, and I still had a chamber to offer to a poor young girl who had been brought, very ill, to the potter down below; and this young girl found that she had been a witness of the robbery by which I was victimized, and she had prayed the good God that the brigands should do me no harm, and one day perhaps her testimony and this weapon which she has found may help me in discovering my robbers. Now, you see well, my child, in all this the finger of Providence, one is therefore right never to despair, ha, ha!

> Lend a charm to my philosophy
> To dissipate sad dreams; and then,
> Glass in hand, let each one trust himself
> To the God of all good men."

The confidences of the old man and the young girl had knitted still closer the friendship which united them; now they were no longer strangers one to the other, they knew each other, and they had a secret which united them. For the good

Savenay was entirely of the same opinion as Rose-Marie's father, he thought that she should speak to no one of what she had seen in the forest, as that might expose her to a thousand dangers if those who had committed the crime knew that she had been a witness, and that she possessed a weapon which might serve as evidence against them.

It was then arranged that Rose-Marie should say nothing to Madame Bichat, or to anybody, of where she had seen the old man before, and the latter returned the little pistol to its former resting place, saying,—

"You must not show that again, you must hide it carefully from all eyes, and since you think, my child, that those who robbed me are society men, why, then, perhaps by chance you will meet them, you may see in their hands the fellow weapon to this one; one doesn't know what may happen, but the principal thing is to be prudent, and not to expose yourself by betraying your secret; besides, your father will soon come to Paris, and I think that he will be of the same opinion."

But several days passed, Rose-Marie was able to rise, to move about the chamber, to sit by the window and breathe the fresh air, and up to this time her father had not yet answered her letter, and he had not come to see her at Paris, as she had hoped; the young girl began to be uneasy at receiving no news of Jerome, and she thought of

returning to the village as soon as her strength would permit her to do so.

"If, however, we could have found your uncles here," said Papa Savenay. "Since your father does not come to seek you, it is because he thinks, no doubt, that you have found the home of one of his brothers. Would you like me to try again to find out the addresses that they gave you at first, do you remember them?"

"I remember," said Rose, "that the first time, when I went to find my Uncle Nicolas Gogo, the address was 62 Rue Saint-Lazare, and it was there that I went first."

"Rue Saint-Lazare, number sixty-two, hang it, that's very singular, it seems to me that it was there I was to find M. Saint-Godibert, who was to place my funds."

"You haven't been to see him, then?"

"What was the use, my child? — what had I to do there? To say to him, monsieur, some one has stolen the money which I expected to place with you, that would have been useless; but I have kept the letter of recommendation which was given to me by M. Cendrillon, see, here's the address —"

The good man fumbled in the pocket of his vest, drew out a letter, still sealed, and read,—

"M. Saint-Godibert, 62 Rue Saint-Lazare."

"It was in that house that I should have found my Uncle Nicolas," said Rose.

"Well, then, my child, I will go and see this

M. Saint-Godibert. Thanks to this letter he will receive me well, I am sure of it, and perhaps through him, we can ascertain if your Uncle Gogo formerly lived in his house."

The young girl thanked Papa Savenay for the trouble which he was still willing to take in order to be useful to her, and the latter left Rose-Marie, saying,—

"You see now, that our meeting was not a chance. Providence arranges these things in advance, let us hope, thanks to me, that you will find your uncles, and I, thanks to you, shall perhaps find my robbers."

CHAPTER VI

An Author's Tickets

The playwright, or the literary man, as his friends delighted to call him, M. Mondigo, whose dwelling, as the reader will remember, was in the Rue de Vendome, was not lodged by any means so magnificently or so fastidiously as his brother, the moneyed man, but occupied an apartment on the third floor, very tastefully decorated, it is true, and furnished with a certain degree of elegance — but it was small and lacked the florid evidences of wealth so conspicuous in his brother's house.

Pretty Clémence, his better half, was seated on a settee from which she could look into a glass, and from time to time occupied herself in arranging a ringlet of her blond hair, which escaped from beneath a very graceful, a very coquettish little peasant's cap, which was immensely becoming. Then she glanced at her gown, and at her neatly shod feet, to assure herself that her ravishing toilet was complete in all its details.

M. Mondigo came and went from one room to another, ran to his dressing-room, looked on his desk, and came back into the drawing-room to consult his memorandum book, exclaiming,—

"Have I forgotten anybody? I don't know what to do first; this is the evening of the first representation of my play; by George, it seems to me that I have still some little things to cut out, some ideas to communicate to my leading man; but if I go to the theatre this morning I shall not have time to give my tickets. It's very tiresome. I have twenty people to see, and I don't know where to begin; the day of a first representation is terribly trying, it's so important to know to whom one should give his tickets."

The beautiful blonde smiled, and said with a doleful air,—

"Good heavens, my dear! don't worry about it, you'll make yourself ill; you go to too much trouble about your tickets — why don't you do like all your confrères? They sell them to anyone who wants them, and do not have to trouble themselves about them."

"Me sell my tickets? — never, madame, never! I prefer to have some good friends present who will applaud my work, who, flattered at being intimate with the author, will go everywhere praising and quoting my play, which will work it up among their acquaintances. I believe, my dearest, that that is worth more, will be more profitable, than to dispose of my tickets by sale."

Madame Mondigo said nothing; she had just discovered a slight disarrangement of her headdress, and was not listening to her husband.

There has been a great hue and cry, people have tried to bring scorn and contumely upon dramatic authors because, for the past twenty years or so, in order to disembarrass themselves of a very wearisome task and to avoid the uncertainty and the loss of time which they experienced in placing, or rather giving, their tickets, they have yielded to the propositions which have been made in their interests and have farmed this part of their author's rights to people who openly trade with them; that is to say, who sell to the regular theatre-goers, author's tickets at a rather lower price than that which they would pay at the office.

In the first place, the tickets which, according to agreement, the theatrical management allows to an author when playing his piece, belong as a matter of course to the latter, who can dispose of them as he pleases. This is no longer a question. It is so well recognized that several theatrical managers will purchase the author's tickets themselves; there are some theatres where the authors do not sign any, but then the rights are paid for instead; this is a step which has come about by degrees and the matter has never been contested.

Regarding the many reproaches which have been brought against dramatic authors, to the effect that they evince self-interest, cupidity and avarice, and show much too mercantile a spirit; in a word

that they want to make money out of everything: First of all, we can answer that we live in a century when this love, this thirst for money has become general, and that dramatic authors are not more blamable than others in seeking to obtain a part of the product of their work; they are, moreover, exposed to many reverses, for it often happens that in one evening, in two hours, and sometimes less, they see the result of two months' labor vanish.

But you haven't risked any merchandise, any capital, certain people will cry. What have you lost, then?— what have you failed to gain, after all? What have I, a dramatic author lost when my play fails? Why I have lost all the time that I have employed on the work,— and this work, which seems to you like playing, a mere trifle, something useless, because it is destined to amuse you in your moments of leisure, is far more fatiguing than that of a mechanic, a ploughman, for it taxes unceasingly the fibres which correspond with the brain, it heats the blood, irritates the nerves, and keeps one's mind, when he has any, in continual agitation; and, for this very reason, ought to still further fatigue those who have little mind (I was going to say none), and who give themselves useless trouble when they try to get something out of a head which contains nothing. And then the time employed or lost in writing a play — is that nothing? Yet time is

the only thing of real value, the value of all other things being but conventional; with gold, silver, diamonds, with everything which has a conventional value among men, you cannot add a year, a month, a day, at least, to your allotted time. You can never go back and obtain over again the time which you have well or ill employed.

Let us go back to our author's tickets. At Paris there are some cafés, some drapers' or hairdressers' shops where there is an agency for them; this does not injure the usual business of the establishment; on the contrary it brings a good many people there, for there is no harm in going to buy a ticket for the play, and there need be no mystery in asking for a balcony for the Vaudeville, a box for the Gymnase, or a first gallery for the Varieties.

Would you like to know why the authors have thought it best to relieve themselves of the trouble of disposing of their tickets? We are now going to show you some of the tribulations to which these tickets gave birth, and we shall only tell the truth; for, in general, truth is more amusing than exaggeration.

Mondigo, who was to present on this evening a new piece in several acts, could dispose of thirty places for the first representation, and as many more for the two following ones; but he had received from his friends and acquaintances requests for more than a hundred tickets. He had made his lists for the first representation, and had

tried to arrange it to please everybody. He had reserved the best places for personages whom he considered of the greatest importance, or for friends on whom he particularly counted. It even happened quite often that he refused a place more to his brother or to his nephews rather than displease somebody who had a journalistic connection.

"I must, however, go to my rehearsal," cried Mondigo, after having for the twentieth time taken account of his tickets. "Clémence, here are the tickets that I have promised; I have written on each package the name of the person for whom it is destined. You won't make any mistake, dearest."

"I hope that I have a box," cried the beautiful Clémence, without taking her eyes from the mirror.

"Yes, yes, certainly."

"And in the centre front?"

"Yes, madame, centre front."

"And in the first row?"

"Why, of course."

"Have you given your brother and his wife a box?"

"Yes, of course, I gave it to them yesterday."

"But is it in the same row as ours?"

"Yes."

"Then, monsieur, I shall not go to see your play this evening."

"How is that, Clémence? what are you saying? You won't be present at your husband's triumph, for it will be a triumph, I have the greatest expectancy of it! Why, what will people think of this indifference on your part?"

"It is very little matter what anybody will think, monsieur; but as your sister-in-law, Madame Saint-Godibert, is continually crushing me with her fortune, her luxury, her toilet, her diamonds, it is quite right that I should sometimes take a little revenge, and that, as the wife of the author of the new piece, I should have a better place than she. It's an honor that I wish you to accord me, monsieur; it is necessary from time to time to show these people who recognize no merit except money that mind has sometimes the preference."

"Be easy, Clémence, my sister-in-law's box is on the second row, and not on the first, I remember now."

"You are sure of it?"

"Very sure of it."

"That is all right, then, I will go."

"Ah, here is the ticket for Dernesty, I think he will come here to get it."

"Of what use is it to give him a place apart? He will come into our box, that is the most natural thing."

"Into our box, but it is only for four."

"Well, what of that?"

"Why, I thought that you would bring Monsieur and Madame Marmodin with you."

"No; M. Marmodin would find an excuse from the subject of your play to begin to talk about his Romans; and then his wife is always talking, always moving, she speaks or laughs so loud that she makes everybody notice her in the hall. I prefer to take Monsieur and Mademoiselle Soufflat with me."

"Well, as you will, dearest — but Marmodin and his wife?"

"I have given them Soufflat's tickets."

"That will do very well, I will run to my rehearsal; don't you make any mistake about the tickets."

Mondigo went to the theatre, where they were rehearsing his piece. Hardly had he put his foot into the vestibule when he was surrounded by actors, actresses, and authors, and by employees of the theatre and habitués of the neighboring cafés; and from all sides they asked him for tickets. He had kept six tickets about him, but how could he with those satisfy all who besieged him? He wanted to keep some tickets for the actors who were playing in his piece; but there are some people so indiscreet, so tenacious when they wish to obtain anything! From all sides they endeavored to get his ear.

"Ah, Mondigo, two places for this evening!"

"You can't refuse some to me!"

"You give your tickets early, you are not like other authors, you are more obliging."

"Monsieur Mondigo, you promised me two places the other evening."

"Ah, my friend, you must absolutely give me some for my mother and my wife, they are counting on them."

"Give me one and I will applaud you warmly."

The unfortunate author went up into the theatre, he vainly tried to escape from the crowd of solicitors who were pursuing him, but they followed him from wing to wing, he was surrounded, hemmed in, blocked; the battle continued, he gave places that he had saved to people whom he hardly knew, and could not give them to persons to whom he had promised them. The latter were greatly displeased with the author, and complained that he had broken his word. The actors who played in the piece pouted at him, and poor Mondigo, not knowing how to answer all those who asked tickets of him, took the course of escaping from the theatre and returning home, saying to himself,—

"I should like to send all those people to the devil with my tickets."

On entering the house Mondigo asked if anybody had come to procure the tickets which he had left.

His wife pointed with her finger to the little packets, and answered,—

"No, nobody has come except your pastrycook to get two places; do you give tickets to your pastrycook, monsieur?"

"Well, why not, if he applauds well. I know he adores the play, he said to me the other day, when I was eating some buns in his shop, that he had cried like a calf, as did his wife also, at my last drama; you may imagine, then, that I promised them two places for this evening. Ah, I knew well that he would not forget to send for them; but why don't these others come to ask for their tickets?—it is inconceivable!"

Mondigo seated himself and impatiently waited; he did not wish that his tickets should be lost, above all, when he had refused them to so many people who appeared so ardently to desire them. Every time the bell rang, the author rushed to learn if some one had sent to get his tickets. At last, M. Doguin, for whom he had reserved a very good box, came in, looking hurried, delighted,—

"Good day, M. Mondigo; madame, I present my compliments," said M. Doguin, as he came into the literary man's apartment.

"Ah, you are here at last," said M. Mondigo, running to the little packets, "you came to look for your box; here it is, an open box, four places, you will be perfectly comfortable."

"Why, by Jove, my dear M. Mondigo, we cannot, on the contrary, profit by your good will; it happens that my little girl's godfather has come

to visit us, an old papa, who cannot bear the play, because he says it's unwholesome, and we are obliged to keep him company; you will give me a box another time, next Saturday, for instance. On that day I have no evening engagement, and I never know what to do with myself."

"But it was at least necessary that you should let me know that this morning, M. Doguin."

"I did think of it then, but somebody came in and disturbed me, and it was not until just this minute that I thought of your box. You may imagine that I had other things to think of, my little girl's godfather is very fond of pâté-de-foi-gras, and I was trying to think where I could go to find some of good quality in this neighborhood."

"Pardon me, M. Doguin, but today I am very busy, when one gives a new piece, and in three acts —"

"By Jove! I believe there's a shop on the boulevard near here, where I can get some. After all, in place of pâté what if I should take a jar of potted meat. What is your opinion? — do you like the potted meat best?"

"Good heavens! take some potted meat, take a pot of anything! I don't know what you are talking about."

"Well, I must go and see about that. Good day, M. Mondigo; madame, I present my respectful compliments. Well, then, Saturday you

will give me a box, and if that doesn't suit my wife I will send it back again."

"Yes, count on it, idiot," cried the author, when M. Doguin had gone. "Oh, how I regret having kept that box for him, it is extremely vexatious."

Not more than five minutes after M. Doguin had left, the porter brought two letters for M. Mondigo, who hastened to open them; one of them ran thus,—

My little son arrived this morning from college, and in place of taking him to the theatre where they are playing your piece, we prefer to take him to the Ombres-Chinoises, as that will afford him more amusement.

In the other they wrote,—

Dispose of your tickets for today, but we shall count on your obliging us another time.

The author crushed these letters in his hand and consigned the ones who had written them to the devil. He took his hat and tickets and got ready to go out.

"You are going out again?" said Clémence to him, "why, it is already late, and you said that you wished to dine early today."

"The deuce! I must go out and carry my tickets, you see that I have a dozen places left."

"But, my dear, you are already fatigued by your rehearsals and by all the running about you did yesterday, in offering these tickets. If your

friends don't even give themselves the trouble to come and ask you for them, must you fly to their houses to offer them? When they find that you naturally await their visit, they will say, after a while, 'You're very amiable, they are playing a new piece of yours, and I was the only one to whom you did not give a ticket.'"

The author went out and hastened to the house of an old friend, a solicitor, who had fifty thousand francs income, but who never took his wife to the play except when some one gave him tickets.

"There is nobody in," said the porter to Mondigo, "monsieur and madame are dining in the city."

"Why, that's interesting," said the author to himself, "come, let's see who else. Ah, Badoureau, he and his wife like to go often to the play, it will give them great pleasure to be present at my first representation, provided that they also are not dining in the city."

And Mondigo resumed his course. He arrived at his friend Badoureau's house; there he found them in. He presented himself with the air of one who is sure of giving pleasure, and offered a box for the evening.

"What are they going to give with your play?" demanded the gentleman.

"Oh, by George, I don't remember anything about it, I paid so little attention to it."

"Julie, get me the paper, please, that I may see

what they are giving this evening with Mondigo's play."

The lady got the paper for her husband, who read it, exclaiming,—

"Exactly so! two pieces that we have seen, is it not so, Julie?"

"Yes, and which bore one to death."

"My dear Mondigo, keep your box, we shall not go this evening; we should like much better to wait until they play with your piece something which we have not seen,—I mean something which we have a desire to see."

The author departed with a much less gracious air than he had worn on entering, and vowed to himself that he would never again offer tickets to Monsieur and Madame Badoureau. When he reached the foot of the stairs he asked himself where he should go to get rid of his tickets; he had many acquaintances, but one lived too far away, the others might be out, and it is very disagreeable to go about uselessly when one is already fatigued. It was getting late, Mondigo decided to take a cab and go the house of a young commercial man, who had asked him a hundred times for tickets to the play. He found the young man, and immediately offered him a box for the evening. The commercial man exclaimed joyfully,—

"How amiable you are, so very obliging, four places, you have not two more of them, I suppose?"

"Yes, here they are."

"That is charming, I dine with some friends, oh, dear me, but there are eight of the party; you haven't two more places?"

"Yes, I can still give you two, here they are."

"You are a model author; exactly at the right time you give tickets. You may imagine that I shall go with all those with whom I am dining."

"Ah, you are dining in the city?"

"No, at the Palais Royal; we have an engagement at the Rotonde at six to half-past six."

"The devil! but my play commences at eight o'clock precisely."

"Oh, be easy, we shall be there; we shall dine quickly, and we will go later to applaud you, to look after you. Oh, yes, my dear Mondigo, you shall see we are friends, everything will go well. And should anyone begin to hiss, we shall flog the hisser, we shall carry canes for that purpose."

The author was obliged to calm the zeal of his young friend, but this time he departed, satisfied and elated that his eight places would be filled by men who were well disposed to him. After having made several useless journeys in his cab, Mondigo ended by distributing what tickets remained to people whom he hardly knew, he even gave one of them to his porter. At last he went home, tired, harassed, and found on his desk two balcony stalls which a friend had sent back to him, saying that he was going out to a concert that evening.

"Two balcony stalls, superb places, and numbered, and they will be lost now," said the literary man to himself, racking his brain to think what he could do with them.

"My dear, the dinner has been ready for a long time, it is half-past five," said Madame Mondigo.

"Yes, madame, one moment and I am with you."

"We never dine so late, and I am very hungry."

"And I, too, madame, am dying with hunger, but these balcony stalls —"

"But the maid says that everything will be spoiled."

"Who the devil shall I send them to? Oh, what an idea! Monsieur and Madame de Mésange, very distinguished people who have often told me that they liked first representations so much when they have good places. This will be just right for them, they will be delighted."

"What, monsieur! are you going out again?"

"No, no; but send for a messenger, while I write a few words."

"But the dinner?"

"It's only an affair of a moment."

Mondigo ran to his desk, he wrote a very amiable note, put the tickets for the two stalls into his letter, and gave it to the messenger who had come. At last the poor author went to the

table. While he was cutting the first slice of his roast, the messenger returned; Mondigo sent for him to come in.

"Well, did you find them?" asked the author.

"Yes, monsieur, oh, I found them at once."

"You gave them my letter?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"What message did they send by you?"

"They said, 'It's all right,' and that was all."

"Didn't they say anything else?"

"Yes, but not to me, the lady said to the gentleman, 'Perhaps his piece will be very stupid.' And the gentleman answered, 'Pshaw, we must risk it, there are some authors who are not always bad,' and —"

"That's all right, that's enough; well, what are you waiting for?"

"I am waiting till I am paid for the message."

"What, didn't they pay you where you took my letter?"

"They gave me nothing at all. Monsieur can inquire."

"Oh, well, that's too much, I send them the tickets and I must pay the messenger besides." The author gave the messenger fifteen sous, and Clémence could not refrain from laughing as she saw the face which her husband made, and she said in a low voice,—

"Oh, how agreeable it is to have tickets to give, and to be able to make people happy."

As to Mondigo he was so annoyed by all that had happened that he could not eat, and was even obliged to drink several glasses of eau sucre to wash down the little dinner he had eaten. But the hour for the play arrived, and he thought only of his piece. He recapitulated the number of places which he had given, and said to himself,—

"That will go, there may be some feeble passages here and there, but with friends to sustain, to applaud it — I count much on that young commercial man to whom I gave eight places, he spoke of bringing canes to correct those who hissed — there's zeal for you. We must go," said Mondigo, "they don't give a curtain raiser before my piece, and I think, my dearest, that you will like to see the beginning."

"Oh, certainly, but Mademoiselle Soufflat and her father have not yet arrived, and I will wait for them, they were to come and take me."

"That's good, and I'll wager they'll keep you waiting — and Dernesty?"

"Oh, as to him, he will join us at the play, he will ask for our box."

"That's fortunate, it would have been better to have done the same with the Soufflats, in place of awaiting them."

"But, my dear, they said to me, 'We will call for you, wait for us,' and what could I say? Could I have said to them, 'No, I won't wait for you'; that would have been discourteous."

"Well, provided they are prompt; it's already half-past seven."

"I told them to be here at seven o'clock."

"You see how they keep an appointment, it's quite a distance from here to the theatre."

"What does it matter? — we shall surely take a carriage."

"But even with a carriage we must have time to get there. Well, as for me, I must go on before, that they may not raise the curtain until I have seen how my actors are attired; that's very important; in my last piece my 'noble father' was dressed in a pair of nankeen pantaloons with a blue dress coat; he absolutely looked like a master bricklayer. Happily I arrived in time enough to make him change his pantaloons, and my piece was successful."

"And if you hadn't you think that piece would have failed?"

"My dearest, a false costume confuses the spectator's ideas, they take the person for that which he is not, and that will often injure the work. Mercy, how much worry I had over it! It will soon be a quarter to eight. That is what comes of inviting friends to the play; do they suppose that I do not need to be there?"

"Why, my dear, go on alone; start now."

"And then, perhaps, they won't come, and you will be all alone in your box; that cannot be, it is too unconventional."

"Then you must have a little patience."

"You can't prevent me from saying that it's not right to keep an author waiting who is going to present his play. Oh, how stupid one is to take anybody with him. If I were near Soufflat at this moment, I would accelerate his progress in a very simple manner. Madame, if in three minutes they have not arrived, we shall go."

"As you will, my dear."

Three minutes elapsed, M. Soufflat and his daughter had not arrived, and Mondigo said to his wife that he would put on his hat and go and look for a cab. He was just going out when the bell was heard, it was those whom they were awaiting,—

"Well, you have come at last," cried the author, "you are very late."

"Good evening, my dear Mondigo; madame, I present my compliments. Don't imagine, for a moment, that it was our fault; at the moment that we were about to start Bouchon arrived to rehearse with my daughter a piece which they are going to play tomorrow; Bouchon had brought his instrument, and you can understand that it would have been too disagreeable for him to have come for nothing. They only played their piece three times, was it not, my daughter?"

"Four times, papa."

"I don't think I can be mistaken, it was only three."

"Yes, papa, it was four."

Mondigo pushed M. Soufflat and his daughter towards the door, exclaiming,—

"Three times or four, good heavens! — what does it matter? Let us start; I beg of you, let us start."

The party got into the hack. On the way to the theatre the author, who thought only of his piece, found it natural that they should speak of it; but M. Soufflat could talk only of the piece which his daughter had been rehearsing with M. Bouchon.

Mondigo exclaimed,—

"This evening is the fateful moment."

And M. Soufflat answered,—

"No, it isn't until tomorrow; but I think it will go all right, M. Bouchon will come again to rehearse with my daughter tomorrow morning."

Mondigo said nothing more, he contented himself with exchanging a glance with his wife, which signified,—

"How amiable these people are, and what an interest they take in my first representation."

They arrived at the theatre, the new piece had not commenced, they were playing the interlude. The author ran behind the scenes, and Madame Mondigo placed herself in her box with the persons who had accompanied her. The moment that Mademoiselle Soufflat seated herself in the front of the box, near Clémence, a murmur was

heard among the audience, it was mademoiselle's nose which had produced its effect. M. Soufflat lifted himself higher than ever on his tiptoes and thrust his head outside the box, saying,—

"What is the matter, what's going on there, a dispute, a battle?"

"Oh, nothing at all," answered the beautiful blonde, smiling.

Madame Mondigo was not at all displeased at the effect produced by her neighbor, and it is probable that she had only given her the preference over Madame Marmodin because she had calculated how immensely advantageous it would be for her to have beside her Mademoiselle Soufflat's nose, in place of Francine's agreeable face. The women think of all these little things.

From their box, which was on the second row, uncovered, on the side, Monsieur and Madame Saint-Godibert looked down on their sister-in-law and her party of four in their front box on the first row. The robust Angélique said to her husband,—

"Why couldn't your brother have given us a front box also? It seems to me that he should at least have put us in the same row as himself."

"He could not, apparently."

"I tell you it was done on purpose, these authors have so much vanity; he is very well pleased to come and dine at our house, for all that."

"Don't you know, sweetheart, that the authors

do not have as many tickets as they would like. I know that my brother hasn't. I am very curious to see my brother's piece."

M. Saint-Godibert rested on these last words, looking around him to see if anyone knew that he was the author's brother. His wife made a grimace, murmuring,—

"You should say, 'your clever brother,' that would be prettier, but for all that I don't see our son Julien, where has he been thrust?— have they given him a ticket for the gods' gallery? That would be the last stroke."

"No, wait, Angélique, our son is behind that beautiful brunette in the balcony. But, why— there is Mademoiselle Soufflat, with her father, in my sister-in-law's box. I shall go and say how do you do to them directly."

"No, monsieur, I forbid you to do it, it will look as if you went to pay your compliments to Madame Mondigo, because she was in the first row, and I should not like that."

"However, madame—"

"I tell you that I will not have it."

While this conversation was taking place in this box, Frederic had taken his place behind Madame Marmodin, who was in the first gallery with her husband. The savant had just called on his wife to notice a very elegant lady, who had on a particularly handsome bracelet of rather peculiar workmanship, he said,—

"I wager that you cannot divine if it is a 'psellion,' or a 'brachionisteo,' a 'clydone,' or a 'dextrocherium.'

The sprightly Francine turned her head, smiling, showing to Frederic very white and even teeth, as, without even answering her husband, she said to the big young man,—

"You have come to see your uncle's play; it's very good."

"Ah, I wish that it was in twelve acts and would last ten hours."

"Pshaw, really, do you like the play so much?"

"Yes, when I am near you."

"But you mustn't talk to me so much, old bogy will be vexed."

"Whom do you mean by old bogy?"

"What, don't you understand?" The roguish Francine glanced at her husband, Frederic burst out laughing, and tried to hide it with his handkerchief.

In the second lobby, Cousin Brouillard, who had just arrived, walked about, looking at the boxes and stalls, saying,—

"Well, there are a good many people here, it's astonishing — they couldn't have known it was a new piece by Mondigo. Ah, there are the Saint-Godiberts, they look as if they were quarrelling; and where is the tender Clémence? Oh, I see her, in the first row, in front, and who is that lady with the nose who is with her? Ah, that is

Mademoiselle Soufflat, and behind? Oh, hang it, Dernesty behind my cousin; poor Mondigo, he writes comedies in which he mocks at husbands who are deceived, and yet he believes himself a clever man. In the gallery I perceive Frederic near Madame Marmodin. That little affair goes on well, they are getting on; happily, the savant knows how to write 'cuckoo' in Latin. Usher, usher, seat me, if you please, I see that it is about to begin." The usher looked at M. Brouillard's ticket, and said to him,—

"Monsieur, your seat is not here, go up one flight higher."

"What do you mean by higher, my ticket is for the amphitheatre."

"Yes, monsieur, and that is up above here."

"Has my cousin given me a place in the upper gallery? Why, these are the places one gives to one's housekeeper, one's porter."

"Monsieur, you won't find it too bad."

"No, not too bad, but bad enough. Oh, they send me up there, well, all right, that's enough, I am free to manifest my opinion then."

M. Brouillard mounted to the amphitheatre, where he only found a place in the fourth row, because there were so many people there. He sat down, looking furious, and at the moment when they commenced the piece he blew his nose four times in succession, as if he wished to imitate a fog horn.

The first act of Mondigo's play went without a hitch, but coldly. In the midst of a scene which should have been effective, a dispute which was taking place at the entrance to the orchestra forced the actors for a moment to be silent. It was M. Roquet, who had chosen to come after the curtain was raised, and who had found his place taken. The individual who had seized it refused to give it up to him. M. Roquet went to look for an inspector and then for the superintendent of police. All this made a commotion which prevented the piece from proceeding, and destroyed much of the effect of the first act.

After the curtain had fallen Mondigo ran behind the scenes, and looking through the hole in the curtain examined the theatre to seek there all those to whom he had given tickets, for he did not understand why his first act was not more applauded. He saw, however, some faces that he knew; but M. Roquet was still disputing, M. Marmodin rolled his eyes like an owl, his brother and his wife were pouting, his nephew was leaning over to whisper in Francine's ear, and Dernesty seemed to be entertaining Clémence with much fervor.

"They are all occupied with my play," said the author, who had the kindness to believe that they were thinking of him. Then he looked towards a box which he had given to two of his friends that they might take their wives there, but the

places were occupied by a nurse and four children. The seats which he had given to his young commercial friend were still empty. Finally, in a corner of the gallery, where he thought he should see the pastrycook and his wife, he saw two young pastrycook's boys with their white jackets.

Mondigo went into the wings rather dissatisfied; the second act commenced. During a very long monologue, M. Marmodin yawned so loudly as to excite general laughter in the theatre; soon a sharp hissing came from the amphitheatre, where Cousin Brouillard sat. In place of trying to stifle it by bravos, his friends held down their faces, or looked at each other smiling, with an air which seemed to say,—

"That's not strange, I knew very well that they'd hiss."

The second act was interrupted by laughter and hisses. But Frederic would have been very much embarrassed to say anything about the piece, because he had not been listening. Julien and M. Dernesty were in the same case; M. Saint-Godibert, who was very much vexed at having said aloud that the piece was by his brother, did not breathe a word, while his wife looked at her sister-in-law with a very ill-natured expression. A child cried, one of the pastrycook's boys let his cap fall into the pit, as to M. Soufflat, he whispered to his daughter,—

"I think that we should have done better to

remain at home that you might rehearse your piece with Bouchon."

The third act was played in the midst of a storm that nobody had dreamed of conjuring. They lowered the curtain and nobody called for the author. At the moment when he was threading his way through the corridor in search of his friends, Mondigo met the young commercial man who had arrived only then, with seven of his friends, and who exclaimed,—

"Here we are, here we are, where is it, then, we are going to warm it up."

"It is ended," answered Mondigo, departing rapidly, but not quickly enough to escape Cousin Brouillard, who cried to him,—

"How they hissed! they hissed with a good will, I have an earache from it; but perhaps you will get your revenge, but if you will believe me you will write no more plays on Spanish subjects, it brings you bad luck; there are several of them, and they are none of them fortunate."

The poor author was stopped a little farther off by one of the pastrycook's boys, who said,—

"Monsieur, my boss couldn't come, but we were very much amused, it was very gay. We recognized the actor who played Dom Perdreau—"

"Dom Pedro, idiot!"

"Yes, monsieur, Perdreau, he is a customer of ours, and he told us yesterday 'the piece will be very lively.'"

Mondigo disembarrassed himself of all the people who seemed to make game of his impatience, and at length arrived at his wife's box. But he found nobody there except M. Soufflat and his daughter.

"Where is Clémence gone?" demanded the author.

"The noise that they made caused her to feel ill, and she went out a little before the end with M. Dernesty," answered M. Soufflat.

"O my poor Clémence, I understand, she is so nervous, so impressionable, how she must have suffered. What a cabal, what a horrible cabal; what do you think of it?"

M. Soufflat advanced, pushed out his two lips with a very doubtful air,—

"Hum, hum, when they get me to a first representation—"

Hardly satisfied with this answer, the author bowed and left, saying to himself,—

"Fine judges these are! three-quarters of them have no opinions except those that are made for them; incapable of judging for themselves they will not express an opinion until some one bolder than themselves has expressed one. If his opinion be favorable, they share it; but if it be unfavorable, they share that also."

As he went home, Mondigo observed,—

"My wife was right, I was a simpleton with my tickets—hereafter I shall do as others do.

What a day's work. I passed my time in awaiting people who failed to come, in running uselessly about, taking cabs, paying messengers, giving places to men who gave them to others or who arrived when the play was done, or who sent your tickets back to you and said uncomplimentary things about you. Thanks! I have had enough of it!"

And now do you understand why authors no longer give away their tickets? I should, however, except the first three representations of their works, during which they leave the parterre to the hired clappers of the pit, or give the seats there to those of their friends who will not give them the trouble of going after them or sending to look for them.

CHAPTER VII

The Hidden Picture

In one of those very pretty houses which they have lately built in the Rue Notre-dame-de-Lorette, there was, at the time of which I am writing, an exceedingly comfortable studio, which, though not of very large dimensions, was still sizeable enough to give house-room to several landscapes of rather extensive proportions, and was decorated with that graceful originality which artists, and above all, those who wield the brush, know how to carry into all they undertake. This studio was, however, lacking in costly "properties," and did not as yet indicate an owner whose fame was assured and the strokes of whose brush were worth their weight in gold; to counterbalance this, however, the atelier was filled with its master's work, and in all of the numerous studies, rough drafts and sketches, as well as the finished pictures with which it was so amply stocked, there was talent, life, inspiration.

Here it was that Leopold Bercourt worked, the young man whom we have seen in the forest of Fontainebleau, where as well as copying picturesque sites he had painted Rose-Marie's por-

trait. There, in their last interview, the young man had said to his pretty model that before a month had passed he would go to the village of Avon to see her again and make her father's acquaintance. However, it was two months after that conversation that Rose-Marie had left her village, and the young man, whom she had always hoped to see, had not then returned as he had promised.

Had Leopold, like young men for the most part, forgotten his promise when far from the sweet child who had been willing to let him copy her charming face? No, he had not done so. But things do not always eventuate as we hope, and the most simple cause often suffices to suddenly derange all the plans and projects we have made for the future.

About four weeks after his return to Paris, and when the young painter was getting ready to start for Fontainebleau, he had felt, when walking in the street, something strike him on the leg, then a very sharp pain had supervened, then he had found it impossible to put his heel to the ground or to continue to walk.

Leopold had turned and looked on all sides to see if he could find from whence had come the blow he believed himself to have sustained. But nobody was passing him at the time, and so no one could have struck him. He had not received a stroke, he had not fallen, nor had he made a

false step, yet, for all that, he suddenly became lame.

It was one of those thousand inconveniences to which our frail nature is liable and against which all precautions are vain. Leopold had had what is commonly called, "a lash from the whip." It is one of those accidents which surprise you when you least expect it, sometimes when you are going to dine in the city or are on the way to a ball. It is not dangerous, but it is very painful. Besides, it nails you to your chair for a fortnight and sometimes for a month. Leopold tried to walk too soon, in the hope of hastening a cure, which, on the contrary he had retarded, and this was why he had not appeared at the village of Avon before Rose-Marie's departure for the capital.

Hardly had he recovered the use of his leg, when Leopold had taken the train as far as Corbeil, then the coach to Fontainebleau, then he had walked as far as the village, feeling his heart already beating with renewed violence at the thought of soon again seeing his ravishing model.

"She perhaps thinks that I have forgotten her," said the young painter to himself, as he followed his way. "The time that I had fixed for my return elapsed more than a month ago. But I shall tell her of the accident which happened to me, and then she will believe me; for she will see in my eyes that I have not ceased to love her, and that my only desire is to pass my life with her."

In a short time Leopold had reached the first houses of the village, then he slackened his walk, and, as he felt some emotion and still more uneasiness as to his reception, he rested for some moments under a tree, and reflected thus,—

"What if her father does not receive me well? —what if he should be vexed that I have made Rose's acquaintance without his permission. But, no, I must have courage; she has told me that her father is good, that he loves her tenderly. I shall say to M. Jerome that my intentions are honorable, that my father, who has perfect confidence in me, has said a hundred times that he will never oppose me in the choice of a wife, even though she should have no fortune — and then she will be there, she will influence her father in my favor, unless I am very much mistaken, and she does not love me, or has met some one else whom she would rather — oh, no, I do wrong to make myself uneasy. Come, let me present myself; but first I must find out where M. Jerome Gogo's house is."

A young country girl was passing; Leopold stopped her and said,—

"Mademoiselle, do you know any one in this village by the name of Jerome Gogo — a farmer?"

"Yes, monsieur, I know him well. Mercy! he came to our house yesterday evening."

"Can you point out his house to me?"

"Yes, monsieur, it is very easy, and you are

not far from there. Take the first lane to the left, and at the end of it, at the entrance to the highway, you will see a pretty cottage with green shutters — it is very recognizable because there is no other house with green shutters in the street."

"Thank you, mademoiselle."

Leopold resumed his walk, he soon perceived the cottage with the green shutters, and as he approached he looked at all the windows of the house, hoping to see Rose-Marie's pretty profile at one of the casements; but he did not see anyone there. Soon he reached the door of the dwelling; it was half open, and an aged woman presently came and stood on the sill. It was Manon, who wanted to get a little air, and to chat before the door with some neighbors.

"Is this M. Jerome Gogo's house?" said Leopold, in a faltering voice.

"Yes, monsieur," said Manon, measuring the young man curiously.

"Is M. Jerome at home?"

"No, monsieur, my master has gone to manure his big field, where he has planted potatoes. He won't be back before this evening."

"Then will you take me to Mademoiselle Rose-Marie? Tell her only that some one from Paris is asking for her — she will know who it is."

The servant looked at the young man with still greater curiosity, and answered,—

"Mamzelle Rose, my master's daughter?"

"Why, yes — is she out also?"

"Yes, I believe you she is, but she is not coming back."

"How's that,— what do you mean to say?"

"That Mademoiselle Rose is not here, that her father has sent her to Paris to her uncles."

"She is no longer with her father — is it possible?"

"Yes, monsieur, four days ago, she went."

"Four days ago — how is that — she has gone to Paris?"

"Yes, monsieur, to her uncles Gogo."

"And did Mademoiselle Rose go alone?"

"Oh, her father accompanied her to Fontainebleau, and put her in the coach for Corbeil; from there mamzelle was to go by railway — one goes so quickly in these days."

Leopold was overwhelmed by what he had just learned; he had believed he was about to see Rose-Marie, and was already happy in that hope, but what Manon had told him caused his happiness to vanish. He stood motionless before her, his head bent in reflection, he knew not what to say or to do.

Manon, seeing that he was silent, after a moment exclaimed,—

"But, monsieur, that needn't prevent you from coming into the house to rest and to await my master, since you wished to speak to him."

"No, it is useless now," answered Leopold sadly. "There is no further need of my seeing M. Jerome."

"Oh, that's different, monsieur only knows mademoiselle, then?"

"Yes, that is to say — I wished — she was going to present me to her father; but since she has gone to Paris — and she's not likely to return at present, you say?"

"I don't believe so, monsieur; Mademoiselle Rose went to live with her uncles, to settle herself there."

"To settle herself, what do you mean? — Are they going to marry her?"

"Mercy, monsieur, I don't know about that! But if they can find a good match for her, why shouldn't they marry that young thing; she's pretty enough for anyone."

"Was it with that intention that her father sent her to Paris?"

"It's very possible! As to that I can't tell you, but I believe mamzelle was dull in the village, and her father, who is very fond of her, thought that she could amuse herself better in Paris."

"Ah, she was dull! then she will not come back!"

"On the contrary, M. Jerome said only this morning, 'Oh, as soon as I hear from my daughter, and learn which of my brothers she is living

with, I shall go to Paris at once, to embrace her."

"He has not heard from her since she left?"

"Not yet, monsieur."

"And on leaving, mademoiselle left no word for — in case I —"

"For — in case you — I don't understand what you mean to say. But without seeming too curious may I inquire, monsieur, where you knew Mademoiselle Rose? You have never been to this house; was it at Fontainebleau, at Madame Dumon's that you made her acquaintance?"

"Yes, yes, it was. Good day, my good woman — if she returns will you tell her — oh, but that's unnecessary since she will not come back."

And the young painter departed with hasty steps, leaving old Manon very curious to know who he could be, and how he had become acquainted with her master's daughter.

Leopold had gone back to Paris in a very different state of mind from that in which he had undertaken this journey. He returned without having seen Rose-Marie, and, what distressed him more than all, without knowing where he could see her again; and as lovers get a thousand tormenting ideas into their heads, above all when the object of their passion is not near to calm them with a smile or a word, he said to himself, —

"She no longer loves me! she no longer thinks of me! that is why she wished to go to

Paris. She knew well that I should come back to see her; she ought to have thought that an unforeseen obstacle alone could keep me, and that I should keep my promise. Her leaving was as much as to say that she did not wish to see me again. If she had spoken of me to this servant! but no, not a word — the woman appeared very much surprised at my visit, she looked at me defiantly; oh, Rose has never spoken of me. I was wrong to think that this girl had any attachment for me, she wanted to go and amuse herself in Paris. If I could only meet her there! But where? — at whose house? Oh, I'm a fool to love her, I must forget this young girl."

In accordance with this resolve, Leopold's first care on reaching Paris was to visit the theatres, the promenades, the public places, in the hope of there meeting Rose-Marie.

At all the houses he frequented he asked if they knew M. Gogo, and as the young girl had told him that one of her uncles was a writer of plays for the theatres he looked every day at the posters of plays, and looked under each piece for the name of Gogo, which would have put him in the way of finding the author. But despite all this he was unsuccessful, he could learn nothing about the pretty girl of the forest, and that was why he was so sad in his study.

In a kind of embrasure of this room might be seen a large green curtain, fixed at the top on a

rod, and fastened below by some ribbons tied to rings screwed into the floor.

This curtain hid Rose-Marie's portrait. While the young girl was only represented half-size, the face was so like hers that for those who had seen her it was impossible not to recognize it. On his return from Fontainebleau, Leopold had shown this picture to his father, who had complimented him upon its execution and the beauty of the model. The young painter had imagined a history, and had made believe that he had painted the portrait of a young girl he had often seen in the country, without her suspecting it. Then, not wishing that Rose-Marie's features should be seen by all who frequented his study, he had carefully hidden the picture with a thick green curtain, tied at each corner by the bottom. When friends, or comrades, or admirers of paintings asked him what was behind the curtain, he contented himself by answering that it was the rough sketch of a picture which he was about to paint, but that he would not let them see it for fear anyone should take his idea. This answer ordinarily prevented any one from insisting, but when he was alone, when not expecting anybody, with what pleasure the young painter drew the curtain which hid Rose-Marie's features from him, and placed himself before that dear image which he had long contemplated with sadness but with love. At such times he imagined himself still in

the forest with the young girl, and that her sweet voice breathed on his ear, he spoke to her as though she could hear. This happiness, though but an illusion, a chimera, caused him for a few moments to forget his sorrow.

Leopold drew the green curtain and stood in rapt contemplation before Rose-Marie's picture, he sighed, and said to himself,—

"Shall I ever see her again? She is in Paris; but what is she doing? If I could but hope that she thinks of me!"

Two little raps on the studio door recalled the young painter from his reveries. He hastened to close the curtain and fasten it carefully, then he went to open the door on to the landing, which he always carefully locked when he wished to look at the picture of his beloved.

"What, it's M. Dennesty!" cried Leopold, on recognizing his visitor.

The dandy, who was in morning clothes, but as usual got up with nicety, with care, and who looked as though he had stepped from a fashion plate, entered the studio, exclaiming,—

"So, my dear M. Leopold, you turn the key of your studio that no one may come in to disturb you. I really was beginning to think you were not here, or that you had a model here whom you were keeping from everybody's eyes. They say that those gentlemen, the painters, sometimes have such pretty models that they try as much as

possible to keep them from the notice of their confrères."

While so speaking, M. Dernesty threw himself on to a couch, where he settled himself after the manner of a Turk.

"You see I haven't a model," said Leopold, "but I was reading, and when I have something interesting I don't care for anyone to come in here unless I wish to see them."

"Then I have disturbed you?"

"No, if it had disturbed me I should not have opened the door."

"You have some very pretty things here!"

Dernesty took out his lorgnon and scrutinized the studies in the studio. As he perceived the green curtain, he exclaimed,—

"What have you there — hidden behind that curtain?"

"Oh, nothing of interest," said Leopold, indifferently. "A rough sketch which I've not yet finished. I prefer that no one should see it until I have completely worked out my idea."

"Oh, as to that, my dear painter, I must tell you what brought me here — first of all the pleasure of seeing you, that is understood. You have talent — much talent! and you are so modest, you are rather too modest, I think. It is necessary to purge yourself of that fault, which is ruinous to most people, but above all to artists!"

"Do you think so?"

"I'm not joking! What the devil! in this century of advertisements, of puffs, of announcements, of humbug even, for that would be the proper word, when each one is seeking to puff himself up in order to be successful, how do you suppose anyone will notice you if you quietly stay in your corner?"

"I think that in order to make one's self known the principal thing is to do good work."

"How simple you are — in a painter that astonishes me. Hang it, when your reputation is made, when you have a celebrated name, be as modest as you like — that will increase your popularity; but up to that time you must make a stir, put yourself in evidence, that is how one succeeds. I said all that in speaking of you the last time I was at Madame d'Armenville's house, which was where I had the pleasure of making your acquaintance; but it is a long time since I had the pleasure of seeing you there."

"I was taken by the leg, I had a 'lash from the whip'; moreover, I go very little into society."

"You are wrong there; it is necessary that an artist should go much into society. Oh, hang it, when we know each other better, I should like to take you out with me, to launch you; I go into the most brilliant societies, I have acquaintances among the best people, I will introduce you everywhere."

Leopold contented himself with inclining his

head; the propositions of Dernesty were in no wise tempting to him. The latter, who gave himself all the airs of a powerful protector, half reclined on the couch, and continued,—

"But then, my young friend — I call you this because I am at least five or six years older than you, and have had a great deal of experience of the world — I wish to be your Mæcenas and, as a commencement — oh, first of all, can one smoke here?"

"Why, certainly, will you have some cigars?"

"Thank you, I have some cigarettes which I infinitely prefer, wait until I light one."

"Here are some matches."

"Very good."

M. Dernesty took a cigarette from his cigar case, lit it, and, as he smoked, resumed,—

"Let us say, then, that if a painter is to become known he must have orders for portraits or for pictures. I saw at Madame d'Armenville's that pretty landscape in which you have represented, standing and half-size, that lady and her sister. I thought it charming, ravishing. The faces have a perfect resemblance, which it is very difficult to catch unless one paints life-size. Then the figures are well placed, they blend with the landscape in such fashion that they are not only two portraits, but the whole forms a delightful picture, and that is what I admire. I should like thus to have the portrait of a lady who is very

dear to me, with a country background, standing, but reduced in size — do you see? Hold, nearly like that young man over there — hum, that's rather small, however."

"We can have it larger than that," said Leopold, "I understand what you wish."

"I will confess to you that wishing to have the opinion of one of my friends I have made an appointment to meet him in your studio this morning, if that will not inconvenience you."

"Not at all. Is your friend a painter?"

"No, but he has a good deal of taste for art. He knows an immense number of fashionable beauties, and could probably get you many orders. You know his name perhaps, M. Frederic Reyval?"

"Frederic Reyval! no, I don't think I have ever met him."

"He's a nephew of M. Saint-Godibert, a rich banker who gives fine parties, who entertains handsomely, by Jove."

"I don't know him either."

"Oh, you know nobody. That is what comes of wishing to live like a bear and not going into society; but I will cure you of that. My dear friend, the lady you shall paint is charming, a blonde, but a pure blonde, one who is neither yellow nor red; a skin of dazzling whiteness, with very languishing blue eyes, very dreamy. I don't speak of the price of your picture — I never haggle

with artists — I should be ashamed to; ask what you will and that will settle it."

"Oh, monsieur, I shall not abuse your generosity."

"My dear fellow! talent cannot be fitly recompensed!"

"Shall I go to this lady's house?"

"By no means! The devil! it's impossible, she will come here; secretly, between ourselves, it is a passion which must be concealed, you understand. One of these days I'll tell you about it."

"I don't ask any confidences, monsieur, and I can assure you in advance that I know how to respect other people's secrets."

"Yes, but between young men these things are discussed — provided that the husbands know nothing! Ah, the poor husbands! I know a lady who calls her's 'Old Bogy'; she is very pleasing also, and when I'm no longer in love with my blonde I shall turn my eyes to her."

A light rap at the door of the studio interrupted the speaker.

"Come in," said Leopold, "the door is unlocked."

"It is Frederic, no doubt," remarked Dernesty.

But instead of Frederic it was a maid-servant who came into the studio. When he saw her the young painter rose, saying,—

"Ah, it's you, Catherine; is my father indisposed?"

"No, monsieur, but there is a friend of master's at the house who desires to see you very much, and he is unable to come up here because he has the gout. Monsieur told me to ask if you could come and see him for a moment."

"My father lives near here, in the Rue Saint-Georges, will you excuse my absence while I go there? — I shall only be a few moments," said Leopold, addressing Dernesty.

"Go, my young artist, go, and do not trouble yourself about me, I am in no hurry. I have my pocket full of cigarettes. But will you permit me to await here the friend with whom I made an appointment?"

"Certainly, monsieur; I repeat, I shall hasten."

"Once more, take your time; I am very comfortable on this divan, and I beg you to do your business as though I were not here."

Leopold took his hat, and replaced his student's blouse by a frock coat, then, with a bow to Dernesty, he followed the maid.

The fop took from his case a new cigarette, which he lighted and put in his mouth, he stretched himself out almost at full length on the couch, then he looked about the studio, murmuring,—

"It's very shabby here, there's no elegance, no style — to have so much talent, and not know how to acquire success! What stupidity! This poor fellow I verily believe puts all his mind into his

camel's hair pencil, but he will make a delightful portrait of Clémence. Ha, ha, he makes me laugh, if Frederic knew that it was his aunt I was going to have painted; after all I believe it matters little to him whether his uncle wears the horns, and, for his part, he sticks close to Madame Marmodin, she is pleasing. Hum, that's well enough to amuse one's self with while awaiting something better; there are other conquests which it is necessary to endorse."

The sound of voices mingled with bursts of laughter were heard on the staircase and drew Dernesty's attention; he listened, and resumed,—

"Who is coming here with Frederic, I heard his voice with others which I seemed to recognize. Hallo, gentlemen, in here — the middle door — open and come in."

The door of the studio opened, and Frederic entered with his Cousin Julien and his friend Richard. The high spirits of these gentlemen, and the noise they made, rendered it easy to perceive that they had been breakfasting and had not spared the wine. Frederic began to laugh on perceiving Dernesty extended on the couch. The latter did the same, and said,—

"I was waiting in expectation of one only, and three come, that's not bad."

"Better than not coming at all it seems to me."

"Hang it, my jolly fellows, you live high, as

any one may see,— what restaurant do you come from?"

"The Café de Paris."

"Not so bad, and who was it that paid?"

"Faith, I thought for a moment that it would be no one, it was I who had invited Julien and Richard; then, at the moment of paying the bill, I perceived that my purse was empty, I had lost everything yesterday at whist — we had played a little high, five francs a stake. I said to myself, well, this is pleasant, for if they have depended upon me these gentlemen may be in the same position as myself; but by a providential chance Julien found he had the money. Well, here is a precious cousin, but he is doing well, this sly fellow of a Julien. Before his parents he acts like a little saint, and I am beginning to see that he is no better than we are."

"Well, now, where the devil have you brought us, Frederic," said M. Richard, dropping into an old armchair.

"Faith, I don't know much about it myself," said Frederic. "It was Dernesty who appointed a meeting with me here, as I have told you; come, we are all together, that will be gayer."

"Oh, what a pretty group!" cried young Julien, stopping before a little picture of some bathers. "This is delightful, what flesh, what coloring!"

"Good, here is Julien looking at a group of nude figures," said Frederic, placing Dernesty's

legs on the ground so that he might seat himself also on the couch. "My little cousin, you mustn't look at those pictures, lower your eyes, for they will give you culpable thoughts."

"We are in a painter's studio, then," said M. Richard, looking around.

"Ah, gentlemen, Richard begins to perceive that he is at a painter's, which is fortunate; up to the present, no doubt, he believed that we were with a wine merchant."

"My faith, I should have preferred it. And where, then, is the master of the place?"

"He will be here directly, he was obliged to go out for a moment and he left me in possession of the studio. Wait a moment, there are some cigars over there, beside the bust of Belisarius."

"Ah, if he only had some models here," said young Julien, "for example, those who posed for these bathers."

"And in the same costume, I suppose; decidedly my cousin is a little roué."

"And this Venus, see here, Richard."

Richard arose and with young Julien examined all that there was in the studio. Dernesty remained smoking on the couch.

On arriving before the green curtain, M. Richard exclaimed,—

"What is it he has behind this?"

"An unfinished sketch, or so the painter told me."

"And why has he hidden it so carefully?"

"Oh, an artist's vanity, he wishes that no one shall see it until it is finished."

"Hum, that seems to me very singular."

"As for me," said young Julien, "I conclude that he has some very daring picture there, one of those things that he cannot leave in sight for fear of wounding chaste eyes. He has even tied the curtain at the bottom with cord, for fear that the wind should lift it."

"The fact is," said Frederic, rising, "that this must hide something curious; that curtain resembles Bluebeard's closet."

"Oh, hang it, we will see what is behind there," said Richard, beginning to untie a cord.

"My faith, gentlemen, do as you please!" said Dernesty. "I don't care a snap about it myself, but if the painter should be vexed—"

"We don't care a snap about the painter, either, and in proof of that, here is the curtain drawn," so saying the young man drew the curtain aside, uncovering the picture that was behind.

At the sight of this young girl seated on the trunk of a tree in the gloomy forest, the young men, who had all four approached the picture, were struck with admiration.

"What a ravishing creature," cried Dernesty, "hang it, Richard, you were right to draw that curtain, it would be difficult to see a prettier head. If that one exists, I must see it."

"If she exists," said Richard, still examining the portrait; "yes, certainly this young girl exists, oh, I recognize her perfectly now. It is a very strong resemblance."

"I also know that charming person," said Frederic, "I am certain that I have seen that face before."

"And I too," said Julien, "it struck me immediately, but where can I have seen her?"

"On the railroad, when we were returning from Orleans," said M. Richard. "This is the young person who sat beside you, Julien."

"Oh, yes, yes, this is she."

"This is the one I should have followed, had it not been for my sensitive Irma," said Frederic.

"What, gentlemen, you all know this pretty girl," said Dernesty, "oh, but I should like also to make her acquaintance. From her portrait she ought to be a 'rosière'"

"Oh, yes, if one may believe Richard, she is a very pretty 'rosière," said Frederic.

At this moment the door of the studio suddenl opened and the young painter found himself in the presence of the persons who had come to visit him. At the sight of Leopold the young men were for a moment embarrassed. However, Dernesty returned to his place on the couch, but the three others bowed to the artist, who had not yet looked towards the green curtain.

"I announced to you the visit of an admirer

of painting, and here are three of them," said Dernesty, "you see, M. Leopold, that I do more than I promise."

"Abundance of good does not ruin anybody," murmured Richard.

Leopold was about to answer with some polite words when, turning his head, he perceived Rose-Marie's portrait, which was now entirely disclosed. Immediately his face became pale, his eyebrows met, and, amiable as he was, his face quickly assumed a serious and severe expression, and he looked from one to the other of those who were around him, as he said,—

"Who has drawn that curtain? I had fastened it with too much care for anyone to doubt my desire that it should not be seen."

"Pardon these young fools," said Dernesty, "it was they who wished to draw that curtain, the demon of curiosity possessed them. My dear friend, men are as curious as women when they give themselves up to it; but after all you should not regret that they have seen this mysterious picture, for it is ravishing, and it would be difficult to offer a more graceful, a more seductive portrait of a woman than that."

Leopold's face cleared a little, and he answered,—

"That young girl seems good to you then, does she?"

"Rather say adorable, ravishing!"

"And the best thing about it is that it bears a perfect resemblance to her," said M. Richard.

Leopold looked at Richard with astonishment. Frederic said, in his turn,—

"Yes, this portrait is not flattering, the original is just as good."

"Oh, the original is one of the most charming creatures who exist," exclaimed Julien, devouring the image of the young girl with his eyes.

Leopold was still more surprised by what he heard. He glanced at the three young men as if he would read their thoughts, then muttered, with the emotion that he felt,—

"What, gentlemen, do you by any chance know the original of this portrait?"

"Yes, we know her," responded M. Richard, smiling with a self-satisfied air.

"I have every reason to believe that you are in error, gentlemen," responded Leopold. "The young girl who is represented in this picture is not a Parisian, she lives with her father in a village, and does not go into society; it is impossible that you could have known her."

"Pardon me, monsieur artist," said Richard, with a mocking air, "all that you may say cannot prevent that pretty girl from being our acquaintance, and above all mine; for, as to these gentlemen, they indeed found themselves with her in a carriage, that was all, but with me it was a very different matter."

The young painter threw on M. Richard a look in which jealousy and anger already shone, but as he considered the ugliness of this gentleman, and the disagreeable expression of his face, he was almost ashamed of having for a moment believed him his rival, and forcing himself to speak calmly, he said,—

"Hold, gentleman, I am still persuaded that you are mistaken, there are often several faces which resemble one."

"Yes, but one does not often meet a beauty like that," cried young Julien. "Oh, if I could only find her again she would not escape so easily."

Leopold compressed his lips and darted an angry glance at the young man who had spoken, but as he looked at his receding eyes and his empurpled cheeks, and noted all the disorder of his dress, he tried to smile, and said,—

"I think these gentlemen have breakfasted well. At this moment they are not quite themselves, and they see resemblances which exist only in their imaginations."

"What do you mean?" cried Frederic; "that we are tipsy. I tell you once more that we know that young girl, we are certain of it."

"Come, gentlemen," said Dernesty, who was lying on the couch, "are you going to get angry? —are you going to quarrel?—and for what? Why the devil don't you try to explain yourselves first? As for me, I am sure that I have never

met the young person who is represented in that picture; my three friends pretend to know her, you, my dear Leopold, declare that they are mistaken, it seems to me that it is easy to know which is right. Tell us, who is this young girl whom you have painted? These gentlemen shall say afterwards where they have met her, and we'll see if the stories agree."

Leopold hesitated a moment, then answered,—

"If I tell these gentlemen who this young girl is, I shall perhaps inform them of something of which they are ignorant and which they desire to know. They again might affirm that she is the one whom they know, but that would not convince me that it was she. All that I can say about it is, that the person whose features I have tried to render upon this canvas lives, or lived, near the forest of Fontainebleau. It was in the forest which surrounds that town that I had the happiness of meeting her; and if you know anything of the forest of Fontainebleau, gentlemen, you ought to be able to recognize this picturesque and savage site, these rocks, these groups of trees, all those were done at the same time. I painted that young girl in the forest and —"

The sound of an easel which fell at that moment interrupted Leopold. He turned and perceived young Julien, whose face had become extremely pale, and who, leaning suddenly against the easel, had knocked it down.

"You seem indisposed," cried Leopold.

Immediately Frederic, Richard and Dernesty went to Julien, who was tottering, and led him to the couch. Leopold hastened to open the window, and bring a glass of water.

"What the devil is the matter with you?" said Dernesty.

"His breakfast has made him ill, apparently," said Frederic. "He didn't spare himself, he wanted to compete with us."

"Yes," said Richard, "and when one is not used to it. Oh, what femininity; as for me I could breakfast all day, and never be ill."

"Here, monsieur," said Leopold, "will you drink a glass of water, would you like some sugar in it?"

Julien threw uncertain glances about him, a deep sigh escaped from his breast, he pushed away the glass which Leopold offered him, as he faltered,—

"I thank you, I do not want anything, I have need of nothing, it was a giddiness which took me, but it has passed now, it is gone."

"You look very pale, however."

"All the same I feel better; it was my breakfast, perhaps, but it's past."

"We have occupied ourselves long enough with this poor convive, this dyspeptic," resumed M. Richard, "let us now return to the subject of our conversation. After what monsieur

has said, if I before suspected the identity of our personages, I am now more than ever sure of my facts, your young girl lived in the neighborhood of Fontainebleau, and our acquaintance got into the railway carriage with us at Corbeil, and she alighted from the coach from Fontainebleau."

"That's true," said Frederic.

Julien said nothing, he did not seem entirely recovered from his indisposition. The young painter exclaimed with agitation,—

"And when was that, monsieur? About what date was it that you met her on the railway?"

"About three weeks ago," answered Frederic.

"Yes," said Richard, "it's exactly three weeks ago yesterday."

Leopold did not know what to say. He reflected, and he hesitated to believe that these gentlemen knew Rose-Marie.

M. Richard resumed presently, turning on his heel,—

"By Jove, monsieur seems to place an importance on all this which I cannot understand, above all when it concerns a little streetwalker like that young girl."

Leopold advanced upon M. Richard, exclaiming,—

"Monsieur, retract that word which you have said, retract it immediately, or you shall pay for it with your life! For you have outraged the purest virtue—"

"I will retract nothing at all," answered Richard, "I know what I am saying, I know what your purest virtue is, your model."

"She passed the night of her arrival at his lodging," said Frederic in his turn. "She remained for several days in his chamber. Is it not so, Richard? At least this is what you have boasted."

"Yes, yes, yes," said Richard, lolling his head back. "I am sorry if that vexes you, young artist, but your mistress has been mine also. She is a nice creature."

"You lie, monsieur, you lie!" exclaimed Leopold, raising his hand on Richard, but Dernesty held his arm, saying,—

"Why, gentlemen, that's not the way to do, I beg of you!—if an outrage has been received, a woman accused of wrong, one should fight; but I am not in favor of boxing or of fighting with the feet, and, before we talk about killing, I would ask again, what does all this mean. M. Leopold pretends that his pretty model is also a model of virtue. Richard assures us that she is one of those young ladies of whom one sees so many. It is necessary to be very certain that it is the same person they are both speaking of."

"As I have not made a mystery of my conquest," said Richard, "I ask nothing better than to tell all that I know about that little thing. Monsieur the artist can judge if I am well informed, and if it is his model. The pretty girl

whom I met on the railway, with Frederic and Julien, was alone, she had no companion on the journey. When she left the station I followed her, I was not long in entering into conversation with her; at first she affected to be modest, but you understand how one takes that sort of thing, that doesn't deter one in the least. This little thing told me that she came to Paris to see her uncles, who were called, oh, a very odd name, Gogo, yes, that's it all right; her uncles, Nicolas and Eustache Gogo."

"She told you that?" murmured Leopold, becoming in his turn extremely pale. "O my God! it must be true then!"

"Gogo," said Frederic to himself, approaching his cousin. "Do you hear that, Julien?"

Julien, who had looked gloomy and depressed since his indisposition, nodded his head and answered, —

"Yes, I heard."

M. Richard resumed, —

"This young girl told me that she was from a village in the neighborhood of Fontainebleau, Avon, I think, yes, Avon; her name was Rose and something else besides —"

"Continue, monsieur, I beg of you to continue," said Leopold, who could hardly breathe.

"She told me that she had come to Paris in search of her uncles. I walked on with her for a long way, from the Jardin des Plantes to the Rue

Saint-Lazare. You know Frederic that I told you the other evening, at your Uncle Saint-Godibert's, that it was to the house where he lives now that my conquest had first led me. She asked for her Uncle Gogo, the porter sent her away, telling her that he did not know anyone by that name; my young girl came back to me looking extremely distressed. Then she set out to go and look for the other uncle; the latter lived in the Rue de Vendome, in the Marais, another long walk; but when we arrived there we found no more of Gogo than in the Rue Saint-Lazare. The little one was still more distressed, or pretended to be so, for you can understand that I began to find this story of her uncles very unreasonable—"

"Well, why don't you finish, monsieur?"

"By Jove! Can't you wait a minute, young artist; you are extremely petulant. I, who understand women, said to myself, this little one has imposed upon me, she has never had any uncle in Paris."

"She did not lie, monsieur, she told you the truth, she has two uncles, and they are in this city."

"Ha, ha," resumed Richard, looking fixedly at Leopold, "you know now that I was not mistaken, and that I know the original of this portrait."

"In fact, monsieur, the young girl whom I painted belongs to the village of Avon, her father is a farmer named Jerome Gogo, and a short time

ago he sent his daughter to Paris, where he has two rich brothers, and where he thought that she would be happy."

"Well, hang it, I hope that our stories accord now."

"Poor little thing, she is our cousin," said Frederic to himself, and then he looked again at Julien, who signed to him that he understood.

"Finally, monsieur, what did Rose-Marie, when she could not find the dwelling of either of her uncles?" asked Leopold impatiently.

"Rose-Marie, that's it, those are the names of the little brunette. What did she? You can understand that she was very much embarrassed, night was falling, and she did not know where to go or what to do; but I was there."

"You should have protected this young girl, monsieur, you should have put her where she would have been safe from outrages, insults."

"Ha, ha, ha! Truly, you are delightful with your duties, I should have profited by the occasion that was offered me of making a charming conquest, and that was what I did. First of all I offered supper to my heroine, and she accepted."

"She consented to sup with you, she could do nothing without you."

"Yes, monsieur, yes, nothing without me. The supper was prolonged, and while we were drinking champagne you may understand that I declared my love. When we left the restaurant it was

very late. I said to the little one, I am going to take you to my aunt's house; I then took her home to my lodgings, and once there, hang it, she did as they all do."

The young painter hid his head in his hands, and for some moments remained as if overwhelmed with shame at what he had heard, but suddenly he raised his head proudly, and going to Richard took him by the arm and forcibly held him, as he exclaimed,—

"Then she is with you, she is your mistress now?"

"No, monsieur, she is no longer with me, she stayed with me for three days, for her part she also is, without doubt, fond of change, for on the third day, on going back to my dwelling, I did not find my pretty traveller there. Since then she has not come back, and I confess that I have not looked for her."

"Monsieur, what you have told me of this young girl is horrible; if what you say is true, she deserves only my scorn, but if it is not true, if you have infamously slandered her, I swear, monsieur, that your blood will hardly suffice to avenge her, and I will charge myself with that duty. Wait, monsieur, if you have only wished to torment me, if you have amused yourself by torturing my heart, confess it now, tell me, monsieur, that Rose is still modest, virtuous, and I will yet forgive you."

"Ha, ha! really you are very funny, you won't believe that your mistress has deceived you, as if that were so rare a thing."

"Rose-Marie was not my mistress, monsieur. By chance, I met her when I was taking some views in the forest of Fontainebleau, her air of respectability, her candor, her modest bearing, her manner of expressing herself, all impressed me in her favor, and when I had seen her for a few times the good opinion which I held of her was confirmed and strengthened."

"And she has served you as a model, and maintained her innocence?"

"Yes, monsieur, she consented to allow me to reproduce her charming face on canvas — what evil was there in that?"

"And the pair of you were alone in that forest?"

"Alone, and the thought never came to me of abusing my happiness, my mouth never uttered a word which could make Rose-Marie's forehead blush."

"You are one of the young men whom we don't often see, then."

"No, monsieur, but I loved that young girl, and I respected her purity, for she was to me an angel of innocence, of candor, and even now I cannot believe that she has fallen as low as you say; a virtuous, modest child does not become in one day an abandoned girl. Oh, I shall find her

again, my Rose; I shall know the truth, and then I shall find you also, and these gentlemen are my witnesses."

"That's good, monsieur, you can find me when you wish — Richard, 26 Rue Montholon. As to your damsel, just now you pretended that we could not know her, I have proved the contrary to you, however; hang it, if you find her she will say that I have not been her lover, women always deny those things."

"She will prove her innocence to me, monsieur, and then I shall come and find you."

"Monsieur," said Frederic, going to Leopold, and offering him his hand; "I do not know you, but your action at this moment is sufficient to make me desire the honor of being counted among your friends. I am foolish and very heedless, but I have never had the thought of slandering women, nor of boasting that I have obtained their favors if I had not. Such conduct is that of a coward, of a hound. I do not accuse Richard, I do not say that he has done so, but I desire as ardently as you do to find this young girl; I have also certain reasons for that, which I cannot tell at this moment, but which you shall learn later on. You can reckon upon my assistance in any searches that you may make, and rest assured that if I learn anything as to the fate of Rose-Marie I will inform you of it."

Leopold looked at Frederic with astonishment,

but attracted by the frank expression of his face, as much as by his words, he took the hand that the latter offered him and pressed it in his own, saying,—

"Thank you, monsieur, when everything seems to have conspired to overwhelm a poor girl, it is well, at least, that she should find defenders in us."

M. Richard was silenced by his surprise at Frederic's action and speech; he made a foolish enough figure and seemed to have lost a good deal of his assurance. Dernesty rose,—

"It seems to me," he said, "that this affair becomes complicated, and as I do not understand anything about it, I demand a remission of the subject until I am more amply informed. And now, gentlemen, let us go, for we have surely occupied monsieur's studio long enough."

Leopold bowed in such a manner as to dismiss the party. M. Richard, who wished nothing better than to go, was the first to leave the studio, Julien followed, Frederic did likewise, after again shaking hands with the young painter; finally, Dernesty also walked towards the door, but still looking at Rose-Marie's portrait, and saying,—

"I do not know what she has done, but of one thing I am quite certain,—that she is charming."

When the four young men were in the street, Richard said to Frederic,—

"May I know what idea it was that came into your head, and which induced you to act as the

chevalier of that young girl who served as a model for this painter?"

"No, you cannot know it now," answered Frederic, "it is a secret which I do not wish to confide to you; but I repeat to you, Richard, if you have lied, if you have slandered that poor little thing, why, then, beware of your ears. Good-by, gentlemen, I have two words to say to Julien, and I am going with him."

So saying, Frederic passed his arm under that of his cousin and led him away, leaving Richard and Dernesty stupefied by his conduct.

As soon as they were out of hearing of his friends, Frederic said to Julien,—

"From all that we have learned in regard to the young girl on the railway, she is our cousin, there is not the least doubt of it. Richard and Dernesty can have no suspicion of it. They do not know that your father and his brother, the literary man, as they like to call him, were formerly called Gogo, in place of Saint-Godibert and Mondigo; but we, who know it, and have not yet forgotten it, we know also that we have an uncle, the farmer Jerome, who lives in the village of Avon. We have never been to see him, which doesn't look very well on our part, for they assure me that he is a very honest man; but the fact that we have neglected this uncle is no reason why we should not show some interest in his daughter, whom he sent to Paris in the hope that she would be wel-

comed by her relations. But what beast could have given our cousin the exact addresses of her two uncles and not have told her that they are at present called Saint-Godibert and Mondigo? Well, no matter, that has nothing to do with the present question. We must now try to recover our cousin, to learn what she is doing, and what has become of her. She is certainly very, very pretty, this young Rose-Marie, Richard is horribly ugly, he is fatuous, a liar, impudent; I begin to doubt his conquest of Rose."

"Yes, our cousin's charming, what a pity that she loves this painter."

"Who can prove that she does? — it was he who said that he was in love with her, that's all. Let us first find this beautiful child, and later we will see who knows best how to please her. I am going to search, for my part; you Julien, search for yours, and not a word to your parents before we have some news of our cousin."

"That is understood."

"Good-by."

CHAPTER VIII

An Unexpected Visit

Again there was a large and pretentious party at M. Saint-Godibert's, and the greater part of the people who had been guests at his grand dinner were present at this function also; many of them had come to make that punctilious call after hospitality received, which is facetiously termed by some people the "visit of digestion"; the others were those who, while envious at being invited only for the evenings, were still eager and faithful attendants at the reunions which took place nearly every week at the rich banker's.

Mondigo, whom his brother no longer called "the clever man," since the eventful evening upon which his last work had been so disastrously hissed, a first night which the unfortunate author had good reason to look upon as a failure from first to last, was holding forth in a corner of the drawing-room to the unhappy Major Krouteberg, whom he had seized on and whom he was holding by the button of his coat, as if he were afraid that in listening to his relation of the plot of his drama the latter would seek to escape him.

The brilliant Dernesty, who had been leaning

for some time on the back of a chair in which the languorous Clémence was seated, took his place at a card table, M. Marmodin also making a table at whist with Madame Doguin and two young men, who, between each card that they played, held their foreheads supported and hidden in their hands, as if the cards they were about to play would decide the destiny of an empire; but it is well understood that whist is a difficult game, and many of those who understand it seek to add still further to this belief by an extremely expressive pantomime, which produces a great effect on persons who are not acquainted with the game.

The pleasing Francine chatted with some ladies, and young Julien, who was standing before them, was looking in a mirror to observe the effect of his toilet, which was very careful, and from time to time glancing at a table at which were seated M. Cendrillon, M. Richard, Dernesty and another gentleman, who were playing rather high.

Finally, the graceful M. Roquet walked about in the midst of everybody, going from one lady to another, doing the amiable to each one, and frequently returning to the mistress of the house, who, since Major Krouteberg was not near her, listened with pleasure to the compliments addressed to her by M. Roquet on the color of her dress and the good taste of her turban, which gave her a good deal the appearance of a Turkish officer of cavalry.

M. Saint-Godibert looked with pride on all this fine company gathered in his magnificent drawing-room, and said to himself,—

"How agreeable it is to be rich, it brings you at once into good society. If I were mayor I could not have more people with me at my house, I should perhaps have less of them; certainly the society could not be more brilliant. How beautifully all the ladies are dressed, they have made fine toilets, they deck themselves out to come to my parties; this is what does a man honor. Ah, by Jove, I have done well to change my name from Gogo to Saint-Godibert; if I still called myself Gogo I wager that I shouldn't have nearly as many people at my parties, and they would not attire themselves with so much elegance to come here. Oh, I have a little tact, I know what I am doing. And the men! what deportment! nearly all with varnished boots, it's delightful! I must try to get some newspaper men to my parties. They would put it all in their Parisian items: 'At the last party given by M. Saint-Godibert, all the men wore varnished boots and all the ladies diamonds,' if I should read that in the paper I would not change my fate for that of M. Molière, in whose honor they have just set up a statue."

Then M. Saint-Godibert approached his wife, who had signed to him,—

"What do you want, Angélique?"

"My dear, it's time to pass some punch about."

"I'll go and tell Fifine so. Dearest, are you pleased? — our party is magnificent."

"That is what M. Roquet said to me. I am very much pleased that Cousin Brouillard didn't come."

"In fact, I am delighted also, he sometimes comes into company with his boots badly blacked."

"Badly blacked, you might say muddy, even."

"And I am sorry that M. Soufflat and his daughter are not here, this is the second time that they have failed us; however, I told them to bring M. Bouchon with them."

"Our son is not gallant enough, not amiable enough with Mademoiselle Soufflat; I don't know of what he can be thinking, he's been coming home very late for some time back, I know that from the porter. I am afraid that he is disorderly in his habits."

"My dearest, it is good form to come in late, and on that account we should be wrong to scold him for it; as to his toilet, I am forced to confess that it is irreproachable. I was noticing a while ago how elegant he was; I must confess that he does credit to the forty francs which I allow him each month. Oh, good heavens! some one has opened the door of the antechamber, if that should be Brouillard!"

"Oh, that's just like him, he will come in just as we are serving punch, and he will drink it in the most indecent fashion."

"Heaven be thanked, it is not he! it's our nephew Frederic."

The big young man, in fact, now came into the room. In passing his Cousin Julien he stopped, and said to him in a low voice,—

"Well, nothing new yet? Are all our searches unfruitful?"

"Good heavens, yes! I have not received any information, and you?"

"I have learned nothing further. Poor little cousin!—and such a pretty face; but if I learn nothing within the next two days, I have decided to go to the village of Avon. I shall go as far as Cousin Jerome's house, and find out whether his daughter has returned to him."

"Really, you will take that journey?"

"Why not? Our cousin is worth the trouble, and I should like also to know if Richard was not lying to us."

"That will be more difficult to learn, for if the little one was indeed with him, certainly she will not confess it."

"Yes, but if she were not, she may perhaps be able to prove it. However, no one knows, but first of all it is necessary to find her; I confess to you that at this moment that would make me much happier, would distract me, and my passion for Madame Marmodin would occupy me less. Imagine a woman, so pleasing and witty as this Francine, who stops at doing nothing to mock at

her husband, whom she calls 'old bogy,' and yet she isn't unfaithful to him. The latter fact is really surprising."

"What, Frederic, you are not fortunate with that lady? I should have believed you were her lover!"

"Oh, by Jove, no! Twenty times I have hoped to be, but I am not. I have, however, courted her very assiduously, I go everywhere that she goes, and I don't speak to any other woman, but I am not a bit further advanced with her. She laughs, she chats with me, but she accords me nothing; I begin to have had enough of it. Platonic love is not to my taste, it has the same effect upon me as those fine cardboard turkeys which they serve to the actors at the theatre; they only give them the desire to eat, those who partake of them pretend to experience a pleasure which it does not give them at all. But she is here, the hard-hearted little wretch. Watch if any one would not swear that I were fortunate with the lady; she looks at me, she smiles, she gives me a sign to come to her side."

"And you are going to her?"

"By Jove, yes! One more attack upon her heart, but I assure you, cousin, that it will be the last."

And Frederic went to seat himself beside Madame Marmodin, who welcomed him with a very gracious smile.

M. Saint-Godibert had been for a moment into the antechamber, where he approached Mademoiselle Fifine with his usual pleasantry, saying,—

"We must pass some punch around, Fifine, not very strong, some half glasses — I mean some glasses half full, that's enough at a time."

"Yes, monsieur, I know — as usual."

"Arrange all that yourself."

Monsieur reëntered the drawing-room, Mademoiselle Fifine called François, whom they still kept because she protected him, and said,—

"Bring in the large waiter to carry some glasses of punch, don't drink three or four of them first, as you usually do."

"Ah, mamzelle, the other time it was you who set me the example."

"Hold your tongue, stupid, you don't know how to behave yourself."

"I do, however, all that I see done by others, just as I did like the old gent a while ago."

"Hold your tongue, when anyone is in a house they should see nothing, you understand?"

"See nothing! Ah, I should like that very well; the other day I went into madame's room, thinking that she had called me, and she was changing her chemise."

"Be silent now, François; if madame should hear you, they would send you away for doing that. Wait, somebody is ringing, go and see. It's somebody else coming."

François went to open the door, but in place of those elegant people who came to his master's reunions, he perceived an old man in a jacket with tails, a waistcoat with flowers, such as they wear in the country, wearing thick shoes and holding a kind of stick in his hand. The goodman had already taken off his hat with a broad brim, and he bowed very politely to the servant, who asked him in a sharp tone,—

"What do you want?"

"Does not M. Saint-Godibert live here?" said the old man, whose fresh, cheerful face did not indicate a man who had come timidly to solicit something.

"Yes, he is here, are you invited to the party he is giving this evening?" Saying these words, M. François summed up the old man in a glance, at the same time impertinent and mocking, but the latter did not appear to pay any attention to that, and resumed,—

"I did not come for the evening, I came to see your master; I wish to see him, to talk with him for some moments."

"No one can talk now with my master, he has some people, a grand party. Come some other time, good man."

"I have not always the time to take such long walks, and since I am here I beg you to say to your master that some one is waiting for him."

"How stubborn you are; I repeat to you that

M. Saint-Godibert has not the time; after all, it's all the same to me, and I'll go and tell him. What is your name?"

"My name? M. Saint-Godibert does not know me, and even if I should tell him my name that would avail nothing. Say only that a gentleman desires to speak with him for a moment; since he has company I would much rather not go in, and if he will come and speak to me here—"

"Oh, you would much rather — he is charming, the old papa, who believes that, with his hunting-jacket and old shoes, I should let him go into a drawing-room where they are all dressed fashionably. There is no fear of that; if I did that I should get my walking ticket. So you won't tell me your name; and do you think that anyone will put themselves out to come and talk with you. You're still very countrified, my old papa, all the same I'll take your message to my master, and I bet we'll have a laugh out of it."

M. François entered the drawing-room and looked about for his master. Seeing him chatting with some ladies, he contented himself with making signs with his hands, which resembled very much those executed by certain people in dancing the can-can. Madame Marmodin, who was talking with M. Saint-Godibert, said, laughing,—

"Is your servant going to perform a grotesque dance in the drawing-room? — look at him, Saint-Godibert, he's gesticulating with his hands."

"Can the clown be tipsy again, really, I don't know why I keep him; that is to say, I do know well, it's because our maid-servant holds to him; but I believe, God forgive me, that he's making signs to me."

M. Saint-Godibert went to his servant.

"What is it now, clown? What does this pantomime mean?"

"Why, monsieur, I wanted to speak to you, and I dared not venture to intrude upon you with the ladies."

"Well, what do you want with me?"

"Me, nothing at all, but it's an old goodman who has come, and who asks to speak to you."

"An old goodman, is he well dressed?"

"Mercy, he's dressed warmly enough, he has cloth pantaloons and a big waistcoat."

"Idiot! I asked you if he was elegantly, handsomely dressed?"

"Oh, no, he looks like an old countryman, he has a jacket with big tails."

"He has a jacket, and he dared to present himself at my house when I have company, when I have the finest society, in varnished boots! Send that man away."

"He wants to say a word to you out there, without coming in."

"Do you think I am going to leave capitalists, ladies in turbans, feathers and flowers to go and talk to an old man in a jacket? Send him away

immediately, François. I am not visible to his equals until ten o'clock in the morning. Go; if he insists, put him out by the shoulders."

François left the drawing-room and returned to the old man, who was waiting in the antechamber.

"I was very sure of it, my good man," said the servant, "my master will not receive you, nor disturb himself to speak to you. Go away now, come back tomorrow, towards midday, and he will receive you, perhaps; that is all that I can do for you."

"But, monsieur, if I cannot return at that hour? You haven't yet explained to M. Saint-Godibert that it was only — "

"What are you talking about, old man, you tire my patience at last. I have some punch to carry in. Go quickly, for if you don't I am authorized to throw you out of the door."

The old man was about to depart, though unwilling to do so, when M. Cendrillon, who had left the card table, came into the antechamber to get a little air, finding the heat too much for him in the drawing-room. The big capitalist perceived the old man, who was going to the door. He uttered a cry of surprise, and ran and seized him by the arm, saying,—

"Why, yes, hang it, it's he, it's Papa Savenay. You are not dead, then. Upon my word of honor, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to see you again."

"Why, it's M. Cendrillon," answered the old man, evincing his joy.

"Yes, yes, it's me; ah, I have been immensely uneasy about you. But where have you been? Come, come with me, that I may present you to Saint-Godibert."

Saying these words M. Cendrillon passed his arm around the old man and led him towards the door of the drawing-room. Old Savenay endeavored to resist him, saying,—

"Oh, no, no, I can't go in there, they have grand company there."

"Oh, well, what does the company matter? Aren't you an honest man? You need be afraid of nobody; I can certify that all those who are in there are not any better than you."

"But my dress is not suitable, I cannot go in, everything is elegant here and this country costume—"

"Come now, what does that matter? At your age one is not supposed to follow the fashions; with white hairs and a good face like yours one ought to be received even at the king's house. Forward, march! Now, I am going to present you."

The old man allowed himself to be led. François looked wonderingly at M. Cendrillon holding on his arm the person whom he had been told to turn away, and Papa Savenay soon made his entrance into M. Saint-Godibert's brilliant draw-

ing-room. M. Cendrillon said, in a loud, sonorous voice, which forced everybody to hear,—

"My dear M. Saint-Godibert, permit me to present to you one of my good friends."

M. Saint-Godibert opened his eyes as wide as possible, as he looked at the individual who was presented to him. Everybody in the room turned and examined Papa Savenay, whose costume appeared a very singular one to wear to a party, but whose venerable and frank face forbade ridicule.

Madame Saint-Godibert alone made a grimace, and said in a whisper to her husband,—

"M. Cendrillon presents to us a man in a jacket, a kind of peasant. Oh, that's too unceremonious."

"Hush, Angélique, you always forget that M. Cendrillon is a millionnaire."

And M. Saint-Godibert endeavored to look amiable as he advanced towards M. Cendrillon, saying,—

"Ah, my dear M. Cendrillon, he is one of your friends?"

"Yes, my dear Saint-Godibert, this good papa is the person of whom I spoke to you the last time I dined here, the one to whom I had given a letter of introduction to you. This is honest Papa Savenay, who inherited sixty thousand francs, which I advised him to come and place with you."

At the name of Savenay the greater part of the persons who were there, and who had also been

present at M. Saint-Godibert's grand dinner, looked at the old man with more interest. They were curious to know what had happened to him. On every side in the drawing-room conversation ceased, card parties were interrupted, and silence replaced the noise of chatting and the bursts of gayety.

The old man whose presence had caused this change, drew a letter from his pocket and presented it to M. Saint-Godibert, saying,—

"Here is the letter that M. Cendrillon had the kindness to give me for you; oh, I had not lost it, and I counted on giving it to you this evening if I could gain access to you, hoping to inspire you with some benevolence for the bearer."

M. Saint-Godibert took the letter with an air of embarrassment, saying,—

"O certainly, was it you just now? Good heavens! if I had known, if you had said that you came from M. Cendrillon, I would have hastened — but not knowing — however, my intention was to go and find out what you had to say to me —"

François appeared at the drawing-room door and shouted to his master,—

"Monsieur, I didn't put the old goodman out of the door because M. Cendrillon took his arm and made him come in."

M. Saint-Godibert became crimson, and madame pushed their servant into the antechamber, while her husband exclaimed,—

"My God! what a stupid servant I have! What a brute is this François! He misunderstands everything that is said to him; I beg you to believe that he made a mistake."

"There's no question of that," cried the big capitalist, "We won't stand on forms and ceremonies. Papa Savenay laughs at them as I do; is it not so, old fellow? But the question now is to know what became of you after you left Nemours, three months ago, on your little horse, on that poor Mouton, who never did anything but trot. What, you started with a large sum, nobody has heard anything of you for a long time, nobody has heard any news of you! Do you know that I was very uneasy about you?—above all because I had advised you to undertake this journey. What the devil have you been doing for this long time, Papa Savenay? We have been amusing ourselves in Paris, we have been playing the young man, running after the beauties, ha, ha, having our little sprees, ha, ha."

Madame Saint-Godibert blew her nose, tossed her head, and moved her chair, exclaiming,—

"Good heavens? how indecent this millionnaire is. I ought to be purple, M. Roquet."

"So you are, your nose in particular."

"But, at least," resumed the capitalist, "it would have been wiser, my old friend, to come first and put your money in safety here. What, what, you had capital to put out at interest and

you let it sleep for more than three months in your pocket-book?—you are not a calculator, Papa Savenay."

The old man shook his head, smiling, and answered,—

"If I did not come sooner to monsieur's house it was because now my visit has not the same object. Why, good God! my dear M. Cendrillon, these sixty thousand francs which I had inherited I could not confide to monsieur, because, on my journey, they were stolen from me."

"Stolen," cried M. Cendrillon, in astonishment.

"Stolen," was repeated from all parts of the drawing-room; and some hollow groans seemed to mingle with the cries which were evoked by the general interest. But, in the midst of the tumult provoked by the words of the old man, nobody paid any attention to the emotion of certain persons.

"Yes," resumed Papa Savenay, "I was robbed when passing through the forest of Fontainebleau, and in broad daylight, in very fine weather. It is true that I met nobody in the path which I was following, and that I allowed my horse to go at his own pace, and that was a very slow trot; but I was so far from thinking that there were any robbers in that forest. All of a sudden two men came out of the undergrowth and ran to my horse's head; that poor Mouton, who was, I believe, as much afraid as I was myself, had already

stopped of himself,—as to me, I confess that I was all trembling—"

"It was enough to make you so," cried Madame Saint-Godibert, "they must have had a frightful appearance, those robbers."

"My faith, madame, I couldn't tell you how they looked, I was so stunned. I saw only two men in blouses, each of whom wore a cap with a visor which hid his eyes; I think that their faces were smeared with black."

"They were charcoal burners," said Major Krouteberg.

"Oh, I don't think so, monsieur, the voice which said to me, 'Your pocket-book quickly or you are a dead man!'— that voice still rings in my ears — was not the voice of a charcoal burner; in short, I saw on the right and on the left the muzzle of a pistol pointed at me. You may well think that I did not amuse myself by resisting. I gave my pocket-book, in which was my sixty thousand francs; I was also going to give my purse and my valise, but the robbers were satisfied, apparently they only wanted my pocket-book, for they gave Mouton a slap and he started off at a smart trot; you may imagine that I did not stop him."

"My poor friend, how you have been despoiled," said M. Cendrillon, slapping the shoulder of the old man. "Ah, the scoundrels, if I had been passing at that time I should have fallen upon them."

"It was a very dramatic event," said M. Mondigo, "on the stage that would be full of interest."

"The robbers must certainly have known, monsieur, that you had a large sum in your pocketbook," said Frederic, "as that was what they immediately demanded of you. No doubt you had had the imprudence to speak of it in some inn."

"That's possible, monsieur, for I am enough of a talker naturally, and I believe I remember that I stopped in a little village which touched on the forest to let my horse rest, and that I talked there, in fact, with the innkeeper. I don't remember now what I said to him, I didn't notice that there was anyone near us. But what would you have? If I have been robbed, it's because of my stupidity, for M. Cendrillon and other persons advised me not to make the journey on horseback, but I wouldn't listen to their good advice. I thought that I was wiser than all the others. The good God has punished me for it, but I made up my mind how to take it, and I said, 'Oh, well, it's the same as if I had not inherited anything.'"

"Poor man, what a philosopher, what courage, thus to support such a misfortune."

Madame Marmodin addressed these words to young Julien, who had seated himself beside her, then, remarking the extreme pallor of the son of the house and the singular expression of his face, she said,—

"But what is the matter with you, M. Julien?

— How pale you are, and how your features are changed."

"Do you think so, madame?—Ah, it is what I have just heard."

"That is what has made you ill, is it not? To attack a poor old man, that is frightful; but robbers except nobody. I think, M. Julien, if a similar event were to happen to you, you would not console yourself as easily as that good man."

Julien murmured some words which it was difficult to hear, and he tried to smile; but his physiognomy presented an alarming appearance, so much was he discomposed. To give himself countenance he thrust between his teeth a pencil which he found in his pocket, and bit it as though he wanted to break it.

M. Cendrillon, who had shaken Papa Savenay's hand, cried,—

"To console yourself is all very well, but that doesn't bring back the money; it would be better to find it again. Did you make your deposition?"

"Yes, the same day, to the authorities of Fontainebleau. They sent some gendarmes to beat the forest, but my robbers were no longer there."

"Well, it's a lost hope, my poor old fellow. Come! what did you do then? Why did you not go back to your place at the ironmaster's?"

"Because they had given it to a poor father of a family, who was rendered happy thereby, and I would not destroy his felicity."

"What a brave man you are, was there ever such a good old man? What grit! They don't make them like that now."

"How long are they going to be taken up with this old man?" murmured Madame Saint-Godibert, pouting, "this becomes very monotonous — and M. Cendrillon, who is talking about 'grit'!"

"Well, Papa Savenay, and what have you done since that time? — why have you not written to me? — why did you not come and find M. Saint-Godibert, to whom I had recommended you?"

"My faith, M. Cendrillon, I did not dare to bother you, and then I had no longer any motive for coming to this gentleman; I found on arriving in Paris some employment in a commercial house, and I took it very quickly. Unfortunately, it was only temporary, and yesterday the work I had been engaged on was finished."

"Oh, be easy, papa, we will look after you, we will find you another place. He writes and calculates well, does Papa Savenay, and he works with as much ardor as a young man."

"Hang it! I am not idle, and, as I am well, I can still do my share."

"Saint-Godibert, you must give my protégé a place, do you hear? — and not as a supernumerary; at least, he has passed the age for that."

M. Saint-Godibert pulled his nose, saying,—

"Oh, certainly, if I can find occasion to employ him, but vacancies are so rare."

"Pshaw, pshaw, everyone always says that; but each one finds a place, for all that."

"If this lasts much longer I shall begin to be ill," said Madame Saint-Godibert to the major, then, suddenly running to M. Cendrillon, she pushed him towards the card table, saying,—

"Why don't you go and play, M. Cendrillon; wait, there is a place here, you enjoy cards so much."

"In fact," said the big gentleman, "I have to get my revenge, for just now M. Dernesty won all my money. You are going to give it to me, are you not?"

M. Dernesty responded only by an inclination of the head.

The game recommenced, and M. Saint-Godibert, seeing that M. Cendrillon was occupied, profited by it to leave Papa Savenay. Frederic, seeing that the old man was left standing in the middle of the drawing-room, hastened to go to him and offer him a chair, but Papa Savenay thanked the big young man, saying,—

"I am very much obliged to you, monsieur, but I am going; I am not used to society and I feel that I am one too many here."

"And why should you think that? You are M. Cendrillon's friend, that is a reason why my uncle should receive you with pleasure."

"You are very kind; before leaving I must, however, ask something of M. Saint-Godibert; it

was for that I came here, without that motive I should not have paid him a visit."

"Uncle," cried Frederic, going to M. Saint-Godibert and leading him to the old man, "Monsieur has something to ask of you."

"Oh, I am busy now, I will think about it, monsieur, and see if I can find something for you," responded Saint-Godibert, resuming his air of importance, "but I can't exactly say when it will be."

"This is no question of myself, monsieur," answered the old man, "but of a person in whom I am very much interested, because she deserves it."

"Pardon me, monsieur, I have a good many people here and I owe to my guests,— "

"I shan't keep you long, a young girl whose acquaintance I made very singularly, but that is another story, which it will take too long to tell you now. Yes, that will take altogether too long. This young girl, then, who dwelt in the village of Fontainebleau, had come for the first time to Paris to find two uncles to whom her father had sent her, she had their addresses; however, neither one nor the other was known where she hoped to find them."

On listening to the old man, Frederic started, while M. Saint-Godibert buried his chin in his cravat, and M. Richard became from time to time red, yellow, and blue. M. Cendrillon, who, while

playing, still listened to what his old friend was saying, exclaimed,—

"Ha, ha, ha! Papa Savenay, you have made the acquaintance of a young girl — what did I say just now? M. Dernesty, I have made my money, look you."

Dernesty contented himself with making a negative movement of the head.

"Well, well, it seems you are acting as though you were dumb," said the capitalist. "Go on, your young girl interests me, Papa Savenay."

"She deserves to, my dear monsieur. Well, this poor child could not discover her uncles in Paris, but — and that is why I came here — one of the two had lived, or so she had been assured, in this house. She came here and vainly asked for M. Nicolas Gogo, for her uncles were called Gogo."

"Gogo, oh, what a droll name," cried M. Cendrillon, laughing half way down his throat. But while the big gentleman laughed, Madame Saint-Godibert sank into an easy chair, murmuring,—

"Oh, the gas makes me ill."

"The gas!" said M. Roquet, looking around on all sides of the drawing-room, "I don't perceive any, perhaps it comes from outside."

M. Mondigo and his brother exchanged looks, for they were almost appalled, and, finally, Frederic made a movement to speak. He was about to open his mouth, but his Uncle Saint-Godibert

stopped him, holding him by the arm, and saying to him in a whisper,—

"Hold your tongue, I beg of you; I will lend you this evening the five hundred francs which I had refused."

As for Julien, he almost uttered an exclamation of surprise on hearing his father's true name pronounced, but he relapsed into his stupor, continuing to lower his head on his breast, and to keep behind Madame Marmodin, as if he wished to evade the glance of the old man who was in the middle of the drawing-room.

"Yes, this young girl's uncles were named Gogo," resumed old Savenay, "and as M. Saint-Godibert lived in this house, which they had indicated to the poor child as the residence of one of the two, it occurred to me to come and ask if you might know one of these gentlemen, whom we can discover nowhere. I recalled the letter which M. Cendrillon had given me to M. Saint-Godibert, and I said to myself, it will serve me as a recommendation, and that is why I came this evening to disturb monsieur. I shall be very happy if you can procure any information that will put us on the traces of one of these Messieurs Gogo, for whom we have looked vainly all over Paris."

"I don't know them, my dear monsieur," answered Saint-Godibert, blowing his nose, to hide his red face, "I have never heard anybody speak that name; but I promise to look after you, to

find you a good place, M. Savenay, something lucrative."

"I am very much obliged to you, monsieur, but, since you cannot help me to find my young girl's uncles, it only remains for me to retire, asking you to pardon me for the liberty I took in coming to you."

"What, are you going already, Papa Savenay?" cried M. Cendrillon, while M. Saint-Godibert, delighted to see the old man go, was leading him towards the door.

"Yes, M. Cendrillon."

"Oh, but before you go, give us your address, so that I may know where to find you, as I shall go and see you. Hang it! I don't intend to lose you again."

"You are very good, my dear monsieur, I live in the Rue de la Huchette, near the Rue de la Vieille-Bouclerie, at Bichat the pottery merchant's house."

"All right, Papa Savenay, I'll not forget it."

"Nor I either," said Frederic to himself.

"You shall hear from me," resumed M. Cendrillon, "because I do not wish that at your age you should dip your beak in the water without being well assured of your rations."

"To lodge in the Rue de la Huchette," muttered M. Roquet, smiling at Madame Saint-Godibert, "that is where they have such poisonous smells."

But he was disappointed in his purpose, for the mistress of the house did not answer him; she contented herself with following the old man with her eyes, and waiting till he had gone out that she might breathe freely.

"Gentlemen, ladies, and the company, I have much honor in wishing you good evening," said Papa Savenay, bowing to all the company.

Julien still kept behind Madame Marmodin, and lowered his head when the old man passed beside him; the literary man turned also, as if ashamed of his conduct. M. Saint-Godibert still urged the old man towards the door, and Frederic looked after him with interest. At last Papa Savenay left the drawing-room, but M. Saint-Godibert conducted him as far as the door which led on to the landing, that he might be quite certain that he had left his apartments. During this time Frederic approached his cousin, and whispered to him,—

"This young girl the old man was speaking of is that pretty Rose-Marie of whom Richard declared he was the lover; she is our cousin."

"Yes, yes, I know it well."

"Your father also is well aware that she is his niece; Mondigo likewise. However, they didn't say so, they would much rather abandon this poor girl than to confess they are the Gogos for whom she was looking. Do you know, that is unworthy. Why you don't answer!—Good God! how pale

you are — dejected. Are you afraid, also, of confessing that you are a Gogo?"

"No, it's not that, but the emotion I feel makes me ill at ease."

"Oh, well, be easy, I know what remains for me to do."

"What is your plan then?"

"First of all, to assure myself as to all that has happened to my cousin since she has been in Paris, to know whether Richard has calumniated her, and, in case Rose-Marie should be a virtuous well-conducted young girl, such as she appeared, oh, then, Messieurs Gogo, I am very sorry to say so, but it will be necessary for you to receive this pretty little niece, and not to leave her to live with that poor old man."

"What would you wish them to do?"

Frederic did not answer his cousin, he rose and approached the card-tables and looked at his friend Richard, whose face wore a singular expression. At this moment M. Cendrillon won back all his money.

"Hold!" cried Dernesty, laying down his cards.

"Why," said the big capitalist, looking fixedly at Dernesty, "you don't play dumb, now, your voice has come back, then."

The young man answered nothing. M. Saint-Godibert returned to the drawing-room with a cheerful look, rubbing his hands. He made a sign

to his brother, and went to seat himself beside his wife, to whom he said,—

"Gone! We are rid of him, and he suspects nothing."

"Heavens!" answered Angélique, "all that upset me. I must look like a quince."

CHAPTER IX

The Cousins

Frederic who had hardly been able to wait until morning, so greatly moved had he been on learning that Rose-Marie was his cousin, and at the thought of all that fact implied if Richard's assertions were true — Frederic rose early on the morning after M. Saint Godibert's party, and his first act was to take a cab to the Rue de la Huchette, where he arrived by eight o'clock; he looked on all sides for a pottery establishment, and at last perceived the Bichat couple's wares exposed for sale. He immediately stopped his cab, alighted, and went into the shop, where he found the jealous Clara, who, at the sight of an elegant and handsome young man, pulled and repulled the ringlets of her wig.

"Madame," said Frederic, "can you inform me if an old man of good appearance, named Savenay, lives in this house?"

"Yes, monsieur, he does live here, on the fifth story; you would, perhaps, like to speak to him?"

"Yes, madame, I will go up to the fifth story."

"You will not find him in at this moment, he has gone out."

"Already?"

"But he will soon be in again. He has gone to do his little marketing for the morning, in the neighborhood; for, as poor M. Savenay has had no work for these two days past, he has time to attend to all those little details of the household; he pretends that it amuses him — but, wait I believe he is coming back, one always hears him before they see him."

A low, clear voice was, in fact, heard in the street, singing,—

> The ragged folk, the ragged folk!
> Are very gay and happy folk!
> They love their kind, they laugh and joke,
> Long live the merry ragged folk!

Soon Papa Savenay passed by the shop; Madame Bichat ran to call him.

"Papa Savenay, here is a gentleman who is asking for you; keep my shop for a moment, I am going to see what has become of that scamp of a Bichat, who hasn't come back."

Without awaiting his response, the petulant Clara dashed out of the shop. As the old man entered he looked at Frederic, who held out his hand, saying,—

"Good day, M. Savenay, do you recognize me?"

"My faith, monsieur, it seems to me I saw you yesterday at M. Saint-Godibert's house, it was you who had the kindness to offer me a chair."

"Yes, indeed, it was I who was polite to you, and you noticed it because the master of the house was hardly so."

"Oh, I don't say that, monsieur."

"My name is Frederic Reyval, I am M. Saint-Godibert's nephew, and I have come to speak to you on the subject of the young girl to whom you have given shelter."

"Rose-Marie is upstairs in my apartments, she is working, cleaning my little home, the dear child; but tomorrow she is going to leave me, to go back to her village, and, in fact, this is the only thing she can do, since her uncles are not to be found. I should like to have you come up, monsieur, if you care to take the trouble. But, good heavens! that Madame Bichat has left us here, has abandoned her shop."

"We can talk here, M. Savenay, since we are alone. I even prefer not to see that young girl until afterwards, for it is necessary that you should tell me the truth about all that concerns her, and I am certain that you will do so; but perhaps you yourself don't know that — you know only what she has been willing to tell you. Wait, my good old man, you are an honest man and I can trust you; I know Rose-Marie's relations, and can make known to her the uncles for whom she has been looking in vain so long."

"Is it possible, monsieur?"

"Yes, I can do it, and I will do it, if this young

girl deserves that they should interest themselves in her, and if — if, since she has been in Paris, she has not conducted herself in such a manner as to make her family blush, as some one has assured me is the case."

"Made her relations blush! — she who is so sweet, so virtuous, so modest — she who loves her father so much, and who in her illness called for no one but him! O monsieur, those who have said ill of Rose-Marie are impostors, I swear to you that they have calumniated her."

"I should like to prove that, Papa Savenay; but how long has she been with you? — how long have you known her? Tell me all, omitting no circumstance."

The old man told Frederic what he knew concerning the young girl, and the manner in which she had been found asleep in the streets, and brought at daybreak to the potter's. The young man listened attentively, then he exclaimed,—

"If it is true, poor little thing, if, in fact, she came here the next day after her arrival in Paris, then this Richard is a lying hound; but how are you sure that when they found her in the street she had only been here one day?"

Madame Bichat's return interrupted this conversation, she was followed by her husband and their friend Glureau.

"Here's this libertine," said Clara, as she came in, "I have found him, he was at the wine shop

with his mate Glureau; but I have forgiven him, I am willing to pass over his drinking a little wine from time to time, provided that he remains faithful to me."

On perceiving the man with the Cossack's head, Frederic sought to recall where he had met him before. Papa Savenay came to his aid, saying,—

"Wait, monsieur, here is the honest man who found her that night, sleeping on a stone bench, and who brought her here."

"Yes, of course it was me," said Glureau advancing. "Do you mean to say I didn't do right?"

"Did you already know this young girl?" said Frederic.

"No, only in travelling with her on the railway."

"On the railway, oh, yes, I recognize you now, it was you who sat in the corner of the carriage, a young man only separated us."

"That's true, I had the corner. Oh, I remember you now, monsieur, you were with that ugly dandy who prevented me from taking a pinch of snuff."

"Exactly, exactly so. And now tell me when did you meet Rose-Marie again?"

"When?—why, hang it, that same night, after my arrival in Paris."

"You are certain of it, the same night?"

"How could I be mistaken about it, since I had not yet entered on my duties as inspector

of sweeping. That poor little thing! She had escaped from your ugly friend, who wanted to take her by force to his lodging, she had run for a long time back and forth in the streets; finally, overcome with fatigue, she had thrown herself on a stone bench, where I found her sleeping at daybreak — not to mention the fact that she made herself famously ill by sleeping there."

"Ah, there is no further doubt of it now, that scoundrel Richard has outrageously calumniated her. It was not enough to have abused his position by trying to lead Rose to his rooms, but, having failed in that attempt, he wished to avenge himself by saying that she had passed three days with him."

"How shameful!" said the old man, clenching his fists, "To think that in place of honoring a young girl who wishes to remain virtuous, this worthless fellow should do his best to traduce her, to destroy her reputation."

"All worthless fellows do not conduct themselves thus, Papa Savenay," said Frederic, smiling, "even in following pleasure and in seeking to be successful with the fair sex, they still know how to act rightly by those who are deserving and virtuous."

"What! What!" cried Glureau, turning back his cuffs, "that ugly dandy said that Rose-Marie had been his mistress? Such a hideous fellow as he is. Oh, that I could meet you again, my dear

friend, I would treat you to a thorough good drubbing — all the more thorough because my young friend Féroce has taught me how to fight with the feet, and I am now first-class at it."

"Let me go up with you, Papa Savenay," cried Frederic, "let me hasten, I am anxious to see Rose-Marie, and to take her to her uncle."

"What, monsieur, you know where they live?"

"Yes, yes, but come, come up with me."

Rose-Marie had completed her task of cleaning the two rooms which comprised her protector's lodging; she was seated at needlework near the window. The young girl was sad and dreamy; uneasy at receiving no word from her father she had decided to start the next day for the village, and she thought of begging Papa Savenay to accompany her that she might attest to her father what she had done during her stay in Paris.

Suddenly someone came into the room; it was Papa Savenay and Frederic. The latter went to Rose, looked at her delightedly, and took her hand, which he pressed in his own as he exclaimed,—

"My dear cousin, will you permit me to kiss you?"

Rose-Marie was lost in astonishment. Papa Savenay, himself, looked at the young man in surprise; but Frederic, without awaiting a response, had already kissed his cousin's fresh and rosy cheek.

"What, monsieur," said the old man, "you are then —"

"Yes, Papa Savenay, I am a Gogo, but on the distaff side. I am the son of Thérêse, your father's sister, cousin; she married M. Reyval, and that is why I am called Frederic Reyval."

Rose-Marie timidly lifted her eyes to her cousin, and said in a faltering voice,—

"Oh, cousin, how pleased I am to have found my family, for you must know where my uncles are."

"Yes, cousin, yes, certainly I know; but, first of all, will you not tell me who gave you their addresses in Paris?"

"It was Cousin Brouillard, who came to see us at Avon this summer; he told me that my Uncle Nicolas lived on the Rue Saint-Lazare, and my Uncle Eustache in the Rue de Vendome."

"Nor did he deceive you as to that; but what I cannot understand is that, when giving you your uncles' addresses, he did not think to tell you also that they had changed their names."

"Their names! What, cousin, aren't my uncles called Gogo now?"

"No, my pretty cousin, and that is why you looked for them and asked for them in vain in Paris, where there are no longer any Gogos; the Gogo is lost, annihilated, sunk, dead in fact."

"Dead! Oh my God! What do you mean to say by that?"

"I mean to say that now Eustache Gogo, the literary man, is named Mondigo; and that Nicolas Gogo, the financier, the banker, has become M. Saint-Godibert."

"Saint-Godibert," said old Savenay, "what, that gentleman to whose house I went yesterday evening, and to whom I had an introduction —"

"Is Nicolas Gogo, my uncle and yours, cousin."

"But yesterday when I spoke to him of this dear child who was looking for her relations, when I asked him if he knew any Gogos, he answered me that he did not."

"Yes, Papa Savenay, yes, and I confess that at first that might give you a bad enough opinion of him; but you have had some experience, you ought to know enough about men to have some indulgence for their weaknesses and their vanity. The whole amount of it is that our two uncles, my cousin, found that the name of Gogo was not high sounding enough, or perhaps that they had too much — I do not say that they blush for their rustic origin, but — what would you have? There are some people who imagine that to be of consideration in society it is necessary to make themselves out to be descended from King Pepin or from Charlemagne; it is, therefore, very common to see people who change their name, or who add to it that of an estate, of a country house that they have bought, or of the place where they were

born. This is a littleness, but it is not a crime. What would be very wrong would be to afterwards repulse, to fail to recognize one's relations. My Uncle Saint-Godibert never had that fault; but yesterday, before all those people, who did not know that his name was really Gogo, you may understand that he would have been sufficiently embarrassed had he confessed it. It would have been necessary to give explanations that would have exposed him to ridicule, a thing which men fear the most; that is why M. Saint-Godibert kept silence. But to repulse his niece, his brother's daughter, not to confess that he is her uncle, that can never be! Only, they will desire to know what you have done since you came to Paris, my pretty cousin, and that is why I came here this morning. Now I know that you are as virtuous as beautiful I shall go back to M. Saint-Godibert's; I shall tell him that he has a charming niece of whom he ought to be proud, and he will receive you with open arms; or, if not—"

"Then it was not my uncle who sent you here, cousin?" said Rose.

The latter perceived that he had been maladroit and resumed immediately,—

"I did not wait for him to send me, cousin, but I know very well that such was his intention. Still another question,—what was your father's object in sending you to Paris to your uncles?—what was his intention in separating from you?"

"My father had experienced a reverse of fortune, he had lost a sum which he had amassed after long years of work; then, fearing that my future would not be happy or fortunate if I remained in the village, he wished absolutely that I should leave for Paris. He thought that his brothers would receive me with pleasure. As for me, I have no ambitions, cousin, I shall return very willingly to my village."

"Return to your village, you? That would be a great pity, we cannot suffer that; make your preparations, pack up your things, while I return to my Uncle Saint-Godibert's, and before two hours I shall come back to look for you. You will come also, Papa Savenay, you have sheltered my cousin, and it is for you to take her to her uncle's."

"Me, monsieur? — but yesterday, for all that —"

"I tell you that it's no longer a question of yesterday. Make up your mind, get ready, I shall come back to look for you."

And Frederic ran off without listening to the observations of the young girl or the old man, he got into his cab and ordered the man to drive to the Rue Saint-Lazare, and all along the road he thought only of his cousin, and said,—

"Pretty and virtuous! O Richard, you hound, you'll have to answer to me. By the way this Leopold, this young painter who is in love with Rose-Marie; shall I go and tell him that I have

found her? — that I am aware that she has been calumniated? Yes, I shall tell him that, but I shall not tell him where my cousin is. I don't see why I should serve the gentleman in his love affairs. Rose is so pretty! She should think no more of that young man, in case she has already thought of him. That story of her portrait is not very clear, but when she is at my uncle's she will explain it to me, for then I shall often go to my uncle's house."

CHAPTER X

A Niece Called Gogo

While Frederic was visiting Papa Savenay and learning the facts of Rose-Marie's adventures since she had reached Paris, as well as making the acquaintance of his charming cousin, M. Saint-Godibert was in turn receiving a call from his brother the literary man.

M. Mondigo was not at all a bad man. Vanity might, it is true, often cause him to do extremely foolish things, but it had not entirely stifled all good feeling in his heart and the simple old man's story of this young and charming girl who had come alone in her trustful innocence to find her uncles in Paris, and had failed to find them because they had dropped their family name, disturbed him so greatly that on returning to his own home after his brother's party, the literary man walked up and down his room in great agitation, while his wife, who was in a bad humor because M. Dernesty had paid her very little attention, undressed herself without taking any notice of her husband.

"This is extremely embarrassing," said Mondigo, stopping before his wife, "and the matter cannot remain as it is."

"Was it not very tiresome, very monotonous, at your brother's this evening?" said Clémence, undoing the fastenings of her dress.

"You heard, as I did, what the old man said, my dearest?"

"I don't know what was the matter with M. Dernesty this evening, but I have never seen him so disagreeable."

"He has received her, she is at his house."

"Who is at his house?"

"The young girl."

"Is there a young girl at M. Dernesty's?"

Mondigo looked at his wife, and exclaimed,—

"What the devil are you saying about M. Dernesty? I am talking to you about the old man who was at my brother's this evening."

"Why, what have I to do with that old goodman?"

"Didn't you hear what he said at my brother's house?"

"Me? why should I amuse myself by listening to him?"

"In that case listen to me, my dearest. When I had the happiness of marrying you, seven years ago, I didn't hide from you the fact that I was named Gogo, and that I had taken the name of Mondigo because it was softer, more euphonious, and also more convenient for my profession."

"Yes, yes, I remember. Oh, certainly, had you been called M. Gogo I should not have married

you; to be Madame Gogo, oh, fie! you can understand that that would have been odious."

"I don't deny it, and now I am known only as Mondigo; my brother did the same in calling himself Saint-Godibert."

"He did well."

"Yes, but we have another brother who lives in the country, and who is still named Gogo."

"What does that matter to you? You never see him."

"But this brother has a daughter, seventeen or eighteen years of age, who has come to Paris to see her uncles, and who could not find them because she was ignorant that they had changed their names. This we learned yesterday evening from that goodman Savenay, who has been robbed of sixty thousand francs."

"Well, monsieur, what do you wish me to conclude from that? — that you would like to receive this niece at your house, for instance. A young girl eighteen years of age, who would call me her 'Aunt Gogo,' oh, how horrid! If you do that, monsieur, I shall leave you, I shall abandon you, I shall beg for a separation."

"But, Clémence — "

"No, monsieur, it is settled; not another word on the subject. To be called aunt by a young girl who is eighteen years of age, and I am only twenty-five myself; oh, I would rather be divorced twenty times."

"But they don't give divorces now, madame."

"That's all the same to me."

And unwilling to listen further to her husband, Madame Mondigo went and shut herself up in her room, leaving the literary man solus, who said to himself,—

"It is astonishing that a blonde like my wife should have such a stubborn disposition, and I thought that blondes were very gentle; that is what comes of trusting to the color of hair."

The next morning Mondigo went to see his brother, the moneyed man, and began to talk to him of their niece. M. Saint-Godibert was already making a grimace and shaking his head with an expression which boded no good, when suddenly Frederic appeared before them.

"Oh, hang it, I am delighted to see you together," cried the young man with a joyful air. "This is just right for what I wanted to say to you."

"What have you to say to us, my dear nephew?" demanded Mondigo.

"I came to speak to you about my cousin."

"Your cousin?"

"Well, what about her?" cried M. Saint-Godibert with a furious air.

"What about her? Why, she's a charming young girl, one of those faces that one so rarely meets, a mixture of grace and beauty, of candor; as to that, my dear uncle, you ought to remember

her, as she travelled with us on the railway. She's that young girl who came into the carriage at Corbeil; her appearance made a sensation."

"As to that, what does it matter to me whether she be ugly or beautiful?"

"Well, it's always flattering to have a niece whom everybody admires; and indeed, my dear uncle, it ought to matter a good deal to you that your brother's daughter should be in Paris without friends, without resources, having no other protector than a poor old man, himself out of a place; and having rich relations who are prominent in society."

"Hold your tongue, Frederic, hold your tongue! Why should this young girl have left her father? — What need had she to come to Paris? The desire of amusing herself, no doubt."

"Oh, you are doing her an injustice. Rose-Marie would never have left her father, but the latter had experienced some misfortune, and then he thought of his daughter's future. He remembered you and he said, 'They can better provide for and establish my child than I.'"

"Oh, yes, fine stories, Frederic; you know what I said to you yesterday. I am no longer a Gogo, we are not Gogos. Be mute also, and I will lend you the five hundred francs you asked for."

"Keep them, uncle, I don't wish for them any longer. I was very willing to keep silent yester-

day because, before all those people, I felt it necessary to spare your vanity. But now, I hope that you are going to do your duty."

"My duty! what do you mean by that, you impertinent fellow?"

"I mean that you are going to receive your niece into your house; I give you the preference over Uncle Mondigo, because you are rich, while he is not."

"Oh, but for that," exclaimed Mondigo, "I would have done so with pleasure; but, while I am not rolling in gold like Saint-Godibert — certainly it is necessary to make some sacrifices."

"There is no question of that," cried Saint-Godibert, blowing his nose loudly, several times, which he always did when he was angry. "This young girl shall not come into my house; she does not know that I am her uncle, she will never know it."

"Pardon me, uncle, she does know it."

"She knows that I am named Gogo?"

"Perfectly, and Papa Savenay also."

"And who told them that?"

"I did, not half an hour ago. I have just left my cousin."

M. Saint-Godibert threw himself into an easy chair, and Mondigo with wild eyes, asked,—

"And me, does she also know that —"

"Yes, uncle, I repeat that I have just apprised her of your change of name."

"It's frightful, it's horrible!" cried M. Saint-Godibert, jumping like a carp in his easy chair. "They know that I am a Gogo; they will call me Gogo before everybody. It's worth while to make a fortune! to give dinners! It will make my wife ill, and me also; Frederic, what you have done is unworthy, I will not advance you a hundred sous more."

And Mondigo strode about the drawing-room with his eyes on the ceiling, murmuring, with an accompaniment of sighs,—

"My wife will separate from me if my niece calls her aunt. Clémence, who is twenty-nine years of age, well told, and who has sworn that she is not more than twenty-five, and, as she is very fair, they tell her that all her life she will look young."

Frederic allowed his uncles to grow calmer; when the first squall had passed, he resumed,—

"Uncles, will you take the trouble to listen to me, and I will prove to you that the evil, if evil there be, is much smaller than you think. When M. Saint-Godibert receives his niece into his house — where she will not be at all out of place, for my cousin is not a big, heavy peasant girl, she is a charming young girl, graceful and well-mannered, with at least as much education as my Aunt Angélique — my Uncle Mondigo will, from time to time, make some presents of money to his niece for her toilet, that she may not be entirely at his brother's charge."

"Every time that I make a grand success I will give her a hundred francs," said Mondigo.

"I should much prefer something settled for her, but no matter, that is not important; to go on, if Uncle Saint-Godibert will take Rose-Marie, that is her name, into his house, and I know very well that he will do so, and if, besides, he will give a little place in his office to the good man Savenay, some modest employment, twelve or fifteen hundred francs, the old man will think himself very fortunate; and, as to that, you heard M. Cendrillon say that he wrote and calculated very well, and was a good industrious man. It will not be money ill-spent to do that, gentlemen; and I promise you that the name Gogo will never be pronounced by my pretty cousin, I will answer in advance for her discretion and that of old Savenay. If you fear that your brother Jerome will divulge your secret by coming here to see his daughter, why, then, you can send Rose-Marie from time to time to see her father, to prevent the latter from travelling to Paris. That's all, gentlemen; I have offered you the means of doing a good action without wounding your vanity, and it seems to me that you ought to accord me a vote of thanks."

M. Saint-Godibert ruminated, and Mondigo exclaimed,—

"That seems to me very well arranged, like that; as Frederic's plan grows it develops clearly.

Frederic, you would have made the framework of a play very well, you understand action; one day we will do something together."

"Thank you, uncle, I had much rather idle. But do you approve my plan?"

"My faith, yes, provided that Rose-Marie never calls my wife, aunt, or me, 'Gogo.'"

"That's understood — and you, M. de Saint-Godibert?"

The uncle with the little nose thrust out his lips, and said slowly,—

"Certainly if this young girl never says that we are named Gogo, and if the old man is likewise discreet, then it's very necessary to — however, I'll go and consult my wife."

"Quite unnecessary, uncle, you should not need your wife's permission to receive a niece. She will be still more opposed than you are to being called Gogo, and I repeat to you that is what will happen if you refuse to give shelter to your brother's daughter."

"Come, then, since it's necessary —"

"Bravo! That's settled, I'll go and look for my cousin in a moment, and I will bring her to you. Forewarn my aunt that she will soon have with her a ravishing young girl."

"What! Immediately, like this? — but —"

"Why, what the devil would you wait for now? I am going to bring Papa Savenay also, that you may install him in your office."

"But yesterday I told him that I didn't know the Messieurs Gogo, for whom he was looking."

"Oh, be easy, I've arranged all that; you had reasons for nobody knowing your real name, and that was why you answered him so, yesterday. By Jove, that honest man asks nothing further about it, and Rose-Marie will say and do all that you ask her, she is so obliging. I'll go and bring her."

CHAPTER XI

The Presentation

Frederic, who had dismissed his cabriolet on his arrival at his uncle's house, this time took a four-wheeler, and telling the coachman to whip up his horses, he again started off to the Rue de la Huchette. On arriving at the Bichats' shop, he did not linger there, but at once went up to Papa Savenay's lodging.

There he found the old man and the young girl still talking about their visitor of the morning, and discussing whether they might expect to see him again. Rose-Marie believed that her cousin would not come back to get her; Papa Savenay thought the contrary. However, the arrival of the young man settled the question. He entered, exclaiming,—

"Here I am; you must acknowledge that I am prompt. I told you I should be back within two hours. Come, my dear cousin, are you ready?—have you packed all your belongings?—have you some parcels to carry? Come, Papa Savenay, get your hat and cane, the carriage is waiting for you. I can tell you my news on the way, we need not delay our starting."

"What! Is it possible," said Rose-Marie, "that you are going to take me to my uncle, Nicolas Gogo?"

"Yes, my pretty cousin, but you must be sure to remember that he has changed his name, that he is now called M. Saint-Godibert. Don't make a mistake, cousin, never give him the name of Gogo, for then, I must tell you, you will cause him trouble, you will render him very unhappy. It is a feebleness, a childishness, if you like, but so it is; in society no one has known him for a dozen years back except as M. Saint-Godibert, and he does not wish to have another name now."

"Don't be uneasy, cousin, from the moment that I learn what will give pain to my uncle I shall pay every attention to what you say."

"What I am saying to my cousin is equally for you, Papa Savenay; my uncle will give you a place in his office, you will be installed there today."

"What! Your uncle will have the kindness? — a place in his office?"

"Yes, certainly, it is not a very brilliant position, I can't promise you a thousand crowns."

"Oh, monsieur, the most modest employment; at my age so little is necessary to make one comfortable."

"But there is also a little condition, Papa Savenay, forget that M. Saint-Godibert is called Gogo; that is all he asks of you."

"I will do all that will be agreeable to your uncle; everyone is at liberty to call himself as he wills, and from the moment that M. Saint-Godibert takes his niece to his house and acts towards her the part of a kind relative, it seems to me that no one has anything with which to reproach him."

"That's very well said. Well, come along then; oh, by Jove, whose is that big trunk?"

"It's mine, cousin, it contains my effects."

"Hang it, it's heavy; I see, cousin, that you have a complete wardrobe."

"You can't carry that, cousin. I'll go and bring a porter."

"It's needless, I can carry your trunk down very well."

"It will tire you."

"I am very strong, cousin."

"You will make yourself dusty."

"I will brush it off."

Frederic had already lifted the trunk on to his shoulder, and he went down the stairs so rapidly that the young girl and the old man could hardly follow him. At last the coachman had placed the trunk on his vehicle; Frederic made his cousin and Papa Savenay get into it, he himself followed, and they started for M. Saint-Godibert's dwelling.

Rose-Marie was much agitated, and trembled as she thought that she was going to her uncle's house, that she did not know him, and that she

was going to live with him. To reassure her, Frederic told her that she would be very happy with M. Saint-Godibert, that he was very rich, that he had a superb apartment and kept several servants, that he received much company and gave grand parties. But far from reassuring the young girl, all this made her afraid of being awkward and out of place in her uncle's house, and she did not hide it from her cousin.

"When one is as pretty as you, cousin," said Frederic, "one is out of place nowhere. But I'll tell you something about the household now. My uncle has not a master mind, but so far as he goes, provided you appear respectful and submissive, he will be satisfied. My aunt is of the same order, only, as she is a woman, if you will address a compliment to her on her toilet and her appearance from time to time, you will be certain to gain her good graces. Then there is their son, Julien, who is your cousin and mine; the latter speaks little, he is bored at home and is there as little as possible. For the rest, I think he's rather a pleasing boy and he will, I am sure, be delighted to live with such a charming cousin. You are not afraid of him, I hope?"

"Oh, no, cousin, if he is like you I shall be very pleased to know him," answered Rose, smiling.

"That's very flattering to me, cousin; I don't frighten you, then?"

"No, cousin, I feel already as if I had known you a long time; and then it seems to me, well—it seems to me that you are like my brother."

Frederic shook his head, saying to himself,—"The devil! I should like better to be something else." However, he took Rose-Marie's hand, saying, "Thank you, cousin, give me your friendship, your confidence, I will endeavor to deserve them. But here we are at M. Saint-Godibert's. His offices are beneath his apartments and his clerks never go up to his house unless they are called there. Now you know the household, don't tremble and let me present you."

M. Saint-Godibert had informed his wife of the approaching arrival of their niece, whom he was obliged to receive into his house under the threat of being known as a Gogo. The proud Angélique had screamed and danced about with anger.

"This is what comes of having country brothers, poor brothers," she screamed, "relations who are nothing and nobody. I am very sorry that I ever married you."

Then M. Saint-Godibert sat up straight, and answered with sufficient firmness,—

"Madame, anyone would say to hear you that you came of a noble family. Your father was a hosier, madame, a little hosier in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine; you brought me a dowry of twelve thousand francs, which they paid me in cotton nightcaps and flannel vests, but today I have

"... ousin, Rose-Marie."

... AL DRAWING BY ALBERT ...

amassed twenty thousand francs income and, when I keep you like a rich marchioness, for there are some marchionesses who are poor, then, madame, it seems to me that, so far from complaining, you ought to be very glad indeed that you have married me."

As this argument was unanswerable, Madame Saint-Godibert had remained silent, but she promised to herself to treat this niece, whom she was forced to admit under her roof, like a negress.

Mondigo had remained at his brother's, as he was curious and anxious to see his niece now, so as to avoid a later presentation. Such were the moods of those at M. Saint-Godibert's when Frederic arrived, holding his cousin by the hand and followed by Papa Savenay. It would have been difficult to find a prettier, more virginal face, or a more graceful bearing than that of Rose-Marie when she entered her uncle's rich drawing-room. Her costume was fresh and piquant, but was not that of a city young lady. The little hat, enlivened with knots of ribbon, which was placed daintily a little on the back of her head, her pretty black hair, smooth and glossy on each side of her cheeks, her tiny feet, neatly shod, all united to give her a charm and attraction to which it would be difficult to render justice.

"Here is my cousin, Rose-Marie, whom I have the honor to present to you," said Frederic, bowing to his uncles with a half, serious air.

The young girl lowered her eyes, blushed, and made a low curtsey.

"She is extremely pretty," said Mondigo, who was certainly surprised, for he had not expected to see so graceful and beautiful a person in the young girl from the country.

M. Saint-Godibert lost a little of his severe aspect as he looked at Rose-Marie. Madame Saint-Godibert alone very decidedly pouted. It seemed as though the beauty of the young girl offended her, and that her vexation was greater because Rose was not ugly. She glanced disdainfully at her niece, and muttered, half under her breath,—

"What coquetry for a country girl,—what will she be in Paris?"

"And here is M. Saint-Godibert and here is M. Mondigo," resumed Frederic, pointing out each one of his uncles to his cousin. The latter again curtseyed.

Mondigo yielded to the charm which he felt in seeing Rose-Marie; he approached his niece and kissed her on the forehead, saying to her,—

"My dear child, I am very much pleased to know you; when I shall have a pretty portrait of a woman to portray in one of my works, certainly I shall remember your face. I am your Uncle Mondigo, you understand, Mondigo, literary man, I am never known otherwise; you will always call me Mondigo, will you not?"

"Oh, I shall not forget, monsieur."

"That's very well; then, as to my wife, she is quite young and will be vexed if anyone so grown-up as you should call her aunt, as she thinks that that will make her seem older. It's a pretty woman's weakness, which we must excuse; but we shall none the less prove kind relations to you. I don't invite you to come and see us at this moment, because we are going to have painting done at our house, but later on we shall see. I have told Saint-Godibert that when you need a hat or some nicknack for your toilet, that that is my affair. For the rest you look very well in that little bonnet, that will be very piquant at the theatre. Good-by, my dear, I shall be pleased to see you again."

M. Mondigo again kissed his niece and departed, after bowing to Papa Savenay.

M. Saint-Godibert, having coughed and expectorated, with the noise which indicates a rich man, took the letter from his brother Jerome, which Rose-Marie handed him, read it with a disdainful air, and said to the young girl,—

"Mademoiselle I am your uncle, I don't deny it; but today I am M. Saint-Godibert, the banker, and I don't wish to be anything else, you understand. If I consent to receive you into my house it is on condition that you never call me anything else and, above all, that you tell nobody that I have ever borne another name."

"No, monsieur."

"That is good, monsieur is more suitable than uncle, it is more distinguished; I know very well that I am your uncle, but I prefer that you should call me monsieur."

"That is sufficient, monsieur."

"And I should like also that you should call me, madame, you understand, little one," cried the fat Angélique, putting on her grand airs.

Rose again made a curtsey and murmured,—

"Oh, I shall not fail, madame."

"Then," resumed Saint-Godibert, "you can live with us, since your father has thought fit to send you to Paris, a little unceremoniously, be it said—"

"Oh, monsieur, if it displeases you I will return to my village," cried the young girl, who felt her heart constricted by the Saint-Godiberts' welcome.

But Frederic had already made an angry movement and was frowning, and M. Saint-Godibert, who perceived it, hastened to say in a more amiable tone,—

"No, my child, you will lack nothing at my house; I am very rich, and if I am pleased with the manner in which you conduct yourself here,—well, later on, we shall see, we will make you a little match. Angélique, what room have you given Rose-Marie?"

"There is a room upstairs, beside Fifine's,

empty. I think that will be sufficiently comfortable for mademoiselle."

Rose-Marie answered, bowing,—

"I shall be comfortable anywhere, madame."

"Then, Angélique, you will tell Fifine to take Rose-Marie to her room, to install her. Later on you will do as you wish as to what this little one shall do."

"Yes, yes, all right, that concerns me."

"I am now going to install this gentleman here in my office. M. Savenay, you see that I haven't been long in finding you some employment. I hope that my friend M. Cendrillon will be pleased with me. By the way, you know, Frederic has told you and you have heard what I have been saying to this little girl,— I am only known at the bank and in business as M. Saint-Godibert; if, after that, anyone should address me otherwise it will be absolutely as if they did not address me at all."

"M. Saint-Godibert can be certain that I shall entirely conform to his ideas."

"That's right, M. Savenay, your answer is very satisfactory. Come down with me and I will install you in my office."

"And I shall go about my business," said Frederic. "Good-by, uncle and aunt, good-by, my pretty cousin," and the young man, approaching the girl, whispered to her,—

"Come, courage, they have received you a little

coldly, but when they know you it will be impossible that they should not love you."

Rose-Marie sadly saluted her cousin, who departed; but when passing near the good old man who had been her protector, she said to him aside,—

"Oh, my friend, what a welcome here, they have not even asked news of my father."

CHAPTER XII

Rose-Marie at Her Uncle's

When her husband and old Papa Savenay had gone down to the offices, that the good man might be installed in his new position, Madame Saint-Godibert rang for her maid-servant; Mademoiselle Fifine came with her usual airs and graces. She glanced disdainfully at the new comer; then she tossed her head and bit her lips with spite at seeing this charming young girl, and because she could find nothing that was displeasing in Rose-Marie's appearance.

"Fifine, you will take this little girl upstairs, to the room next yours, I believe," said Madame Saint-Godibert.

"Yes, madame," answered the maid, "next to mine, that is to say, opposite. François' room is next mine."

"Next or opposite, what does it matter? Is there a bed there, some chairs, and other furniture?"

"Yes, madame, because master at first intended it for M. Julien, but he would not have it because it was next the roof; he has rented a room below, and he has bought himself some renais-

sance furniture, one would imagine one's self at Versailles in his room."

"My son has so much taste, his father says he spends too much, and I can't understand how he buys so much with what is given him. You will take the little girl to that room, which will now be hers. What can you do, mademoiselle?"

"I know how to sew very well; I can make gowns and underclothing and embroider a little."

"That is good, we shall see about that later; go — it is eleven o'clock, in two hours you may come down and talk to me, not before. Go."

Rose-Marie bowed respectfully to her aunt, and followed Mademoiselle Fifine. When they reached the landing the latter espied a big trunk which some one had deposited there.

"Whose is that?" queried the maid.

"It is mine, that trunk holds my things."

"What, you have enough to fill that? Some one must take it up, then, but it certainly will not be me, I have no desire to strain myself! I have already too much work in this house."

"I don't wish that you should take that trouble, mademoiselle, but I am not strong enough. I'll go and ask if I may call a porter."

"Oh, mercy, they'll receive you well; wait, I'll go and ask François. Hallo, François, M. François."

The Norman domestic came, with his mouth full, still holding in his hand an immense piece of

piecrust. He uttered an exclamation of admiration at sight of Rose-Marie, and in his enthusiasm let the piecrust fall.

"Oh, say what you like, here's a fine slip of a girl!" cried François, looking at Rose.

"François, carry this trunk up to mademoiselle's room, which is opposite mine."

"With pleasure. Has mademoiselle entered service with us? I shall be pleased — that will suit me to a T."

"It's not a question of what will suit you. You must know that mademoiselle is related to master and mistress."

"Oh, pardon, excuse me, I did not expect it because mademoiselle is very pretty, and master and mistress are both ugly."

"Keep your reflections to yourself, and carry up that trunk."

François took the trunk on his back, they went up to the top story of the house, Fifine opened a door, and said to Rose,—

"This is your room, mademoiselle."

Jerome's daughter entered her new abode with a constricted heart and glanced timidly around her. The room was in the roof and from the window could be seen only the neighboring roofs. It was furnished with a bed, a chest of drawers, a table and some chairs, with everything, in fact, that was necessary for a single person. The paper was fresh and pretty, the room was orderly and

neat, and would have made a very comfortable lodging for a student or a grisette.

But into Rose-Marie's mind stole a picture of her little room at Avon. The furniture was no better than that she found here, the paper no prettier, but she had enjoyed such sweet freedom there, her mantelpiece had been adorned with flowers, which she had culled every day in her garden, her window looked on to the country, there she had always present to her sight the grass and the foliage, and there she had also her father, who was so good and so loving; there is no place like our father's house when he does all that one wishes.

François, who had placed the trunk in the chamber, looked around him and said,—

"It's very nicely furnished, but it's a pity that the ceiling slopes so much, if you have not been accustomed to that I bet you'll notice it. Since I came to Paris I've often been caught by it, one walks along thinking to go all right — and then, lo and behold, a bump on the head. I've had a few of those bumps."

"Thank you, monsieur, I shall be careful; by the way, it was the same at M. Savenay's."

"And did mademoiselle lodge at M. Savenay's?" asked Fifine, curiously.

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"You have already been in Paris some time, then, mademoiselle?"

"Why, yes, mademoiselle."

"Why didn't you come at once to your Uncle Saint-Godibert?"

Rose-Marie hesitated, then reddened, and finally answered,—

"My uncle is very well acquainted with the reason."

The maid-servant, piqued at receiving this response, pushed François before her, saying to him,—

"Come, be off, scamper! They need us downstairs."

François bowed graciously to the young girl, and said to her,—

"It would be better here if the floor were polished. If you wish, mamzelle, I will come and polish your room."

"You are very kind, monsieur, but it is not necessary; it is very well as it is."

"Well, if you change your opinion, I am here, right opposite, the door to the left; you have but to rap and call François, and I'll come at once."

Mademoiselle Fifine pushed François again on to the landing and slammed Rose-Marie's door, muttering as she did so,—

"If I see you polish that affected hussy's room you'll have business with me, and I shan't give you as many glasses of liqueur as you think proper every day after dinner."

"Why don't you wish that I should polish the

young lady's room, since she is our mistress' niece?"

"Oh, pooh, one of those very distant nieces that one receives, one lodges, out of pity; madame has already told me that she can't bear her, and that she shall try not to have her stay here long."

"Look you, the old Bedouin! Well, all the same, this young girl,— one may say she is a pretty girl, and for once here's a pretty girl who is a pretty girl, and looks so virtuous, so modest —"

"That's all very well, but for all her innocent appearance she is perhaps no better than anyone else. That'll do! I should like to know what she has been doing since she has been in Paris."

While all this was transpiring at the top of the house, M. Saint-Godibert had led Papa Savenay to his offices on the groundfloor, which comprised two rooms and his private apartment. There he had already three employees. He approached his head clerk and said to him,—

"M. Boudin, this is a new clerk whom I have taken."

M. Boudin and the other two clerks frowned, for the newcomer did not look like a supernumerary.

M. Saint-Godibert resumed,—

"Let's see, where shall we put him? M. Savenay, write something for me, that I may see how your handwriting is."

The old man took a pen and wrote some lines with a firm hand, and with great neatness.

M. Boudin and the other two clerks made another grimace.

"Not bad! not bad at all!" cried M. Saint-Godibert. "It's astonishing that at your age your hand is not shaky, and the figures, let's see how you figure!"

The old man placed several columns of figures and very quickly added them up. The clerks made long faces.

"Come, decidedly you have ability," resumed the banker. "What can you do here? — all these gentlemen have their special work. Hang it! you shall do the errands. There are some to be done very often, are there not, M. Boudin?"

"Yes, monsieur, and we have no one to do them."

"Now, that's settled without any difficulty. When there are no errands to do — well, you can copy letters — in fact, these gentlemen will give you all the work they don't wish to do."

An expression of satisfaction lit the faces of the clerks, and M. Boudin said, maliciously,—

"Monsieur will fill the same function as the lawyer's little clerks.

The old man smiled as he replied,—

"Well, so be it, I will be a little clerk, a 'skip-the-gutter.' Mon Dieu, I will be anything you wish."

"You will come exactly at eight o'clock in the morning, and you will never leave until after half-past five," resumed M. Saint-Godibert, inflating himself in his waistcoat; "and for that I will give you a salary of six hundred francs."

Papa Savenay bowed, the other clerks, who were probably ill-paid, seemed to find the sum very considerable for a "skip-the-gutter," and they did not notice that the person to whom this employment was given was an old man with white hair.

As to M. Saint-Godibert, he said to himself,—

"My faith, if M. Cendrillon is not pleased with what I have done for his protégé, he must be very hard to suit."

While one of the clerks installed the old man before a little black table, near the door and a great way from the stove, and showed him a desk, some pens and a knife for his own use, M. Saint-Godibert looked into his office, where there were two desks, and said,—

"Has my son not yet come down to the office?"

"No, we have not had the pleasure of seeing him today," said M. Boudin.

"That's very pretty; here, it's past eleven o'clock. Decidedly my son has no regard for people's opinion, for some time past he has done no work; he's here one moment, there, the next. He's very irregular in his habits, very much so,

indeed! I must look to that. I confess that he dresses with much elegance, that his bearing is distinguished, but I wish that he should work — that he should learn to make money."

M. Saint-Godibert had not finished speaking when the door opened and young Julien appeared. As the door when open screened the little desk at which they had placed the old man, Julien entered without perceiving that they had an additional clerk.

"Ha, here's my son," said the banker. "This is a fine hour to come to the office. You are getting terribly idle, my son, you are becoming —"

M. Saint-Godibert stopped, for on looking at his son he had been struck by his extreme pallor, by his dejected appearance; he resumed in an affectionate tone,—

"Why, you must have been ill, you're so pale. Why didn't you say so? When one is ill, it is different; the clerks never come to the office when they have the slightest touch of fever, they would be too much afraid of giving it to the heads of the firm. We must send for the doctor."

"Thank you, father," said Julien, "I was in fact very much indisposed last night, but that has passed."

"I am glad of it. You drank too much punch yesterday at my party, and they always make it too sweet, despite my orders. It's stupid. Ah, if I had time to see about all that, it would be

done better; but we have a new clerk in the house, one employee more to do errands, the details, to do anything in short. He's not young, but he's still very alert."

Julien turned to see this new clerk whom his father designated with his hand. On recognizing the old man of the night before, his face became livid, he tottered and fell upon a chair which was happily near him.

"Why, now, what is the matter with you, my son?" cried M. Saint-Godibert, going to Julien.

"One would say that M. Saint-Godibert's son is ill," said M. Boudin, but the young man, who had turned in such a manner as to no longer face the old man, passed his hand over his forehead, murmuring,—

"It's nothing, a mere indisposition, however, I am not in a fit state to remain here. I shall go upstairs to my room and throw myself upon the bed."

"Yes, indeed, you had better do so; I am sure that you drank too much punch. Come, give me your arm, for you seem hardly able to sustain yourself."

Julien rose and leaned on his father's arm, but in order to leave the office it was necessary that he should pass by the old man. The latter rose and respectfully bowed to his new patron's son. The young man was overcome by a fit of nervous trembling.

"You have a fever," said M. Saint-Godibert.

"If monsieur wishes it, I will go and look for a doctor," said Papa Savenay.

"No, no, that's unnecessary," answered Julien in a curt voice. Then he went hastily out of the office.

"You have taken this old man into your office?" asked Julien as they went up the stairs.

"Of course, it was necessary to do so to please M. Cendrillon, with whom I do a great deal of business. Then, and this is what decided me to do it, your rascal of a cousin, who had heard what Papa Savenay said yesterday evening about the young girl who was looking for her uncles Gogo, thought fit to go this morning to the old man's house, where she was, and there he told them that I was this uncle, this Go — oh, that name gives me a pain in my throat, I can't pronounce it. What a scamp Frederic is! Finally the little girl and the old man having come to know that, I have made some concessions. I have taken Papa Savenay for a little clerk, and the little girl is at my house."

"Rose-Marie is at your house!"

"Why, you know already that her name is Rose-Marie?"

"Yesterday evening the old man called her so."

"That's possible, I didn't pay any attention to him; in short, I have only consented to all this on the condition that the name Gogo shall never be

uttered by either the one or the other of them. At the first indiscretion I shall send them off immediately."

"But this old gentleman, do you intend to receive him sometimes at your house, in your company?"

"What an idea, what do you take me for, my son? Do I ever receive my clerks? And this old fellow, he looks like a countryman. Didn't he produce a fine effect yesterday evening in my drawing-room? I was sick at my stomach."

"And my cousin is with you?"

"First of all, I don't wish that you should call her your cousin, like that big, heartless wretch of a Frederic. You will call her, mademoiselle; that is sufficient. She will sleep upstairs in the room which you used to have. But what shall we do with her here all day. Oh, how tiresome! What an annoyance! — and all because one has the misfortune to have a family. Who could it have been that invented families?"

"But, father."

"Go and lie down, monsieur, and leave me to ruminate over all this."

M. Saint-Godibert went and shut himself up in his room and there, after having for a long time racked his brains to think of something, decided at last to go to his wife.

Rose-Marie had come down at the hour mentioned; Madame Saint-Godibert had led the young

girl into the little room which joined her boudoir, in which they never made a fire — seeing that it had neither a chimney nor a stove — and had given her several bodices and other articles to sew, saying,—

"You will work on those, and above all don't let me hear you sing while working, I detest that, there is nothing in such bad taste."

The young girl bowed and made no reply, but in her heart she thought that she should never again have any desire to sing; then, without daring to say a word, she applied herself diligently to the work before her.

"Well, now," said M. Saint-Godibert, coming into his wife's room, "what did you do with the little one?"

"She is there," answered madame, pointing to the little room, "she is working. I must confess that she sews extremely well, I was very much surprised at it."

"Come, she will at least be useful to you for something."

"Where shall she dine?"

"Why, when we are alone I think she can dine at our table, that will be best, but when we have company she had better remain in her own room."

"That is understood; but have you thought of something more important. If your niece's father should take it into his head to come and see her?

do you understand, monsieur, how disgusting that would be for us?"

"You're right. I am going to have her write to her father, telling him that she is here, and that it is not worth while for him to put himself out to come and see her, but that she shall go from time to time to see him."

"Very well thought out; I will go and call her. You make her write at once."

Madame Saint-Godibert called Rose. The young girl came with lowered eyes and a frightened expression.

"You know how to write, I believe?" said M. Saint-Godibert, looking at his niece.

The latter felt almost ashamed of the question, and replied, —

"Yes, monsieur."

"Come and seat yourself at this table — you are going to write to your father."

"To my father, oh, how nice! Oh, yes, monsieur, you are right, it is necessary that he should know I am with you, that will make him easy."

"Hang it, I should hope so. Take a pen; ah, there are only steel pens there, no doubt you don't know how to use them."

"Pardon me, monsieur," responded Rose, smiling.

"Ah, they have those in the villages? — how civilization marches. Write what I am going to dictate to you."

Rose-Marie took her pen and waited. Saint-Godibert scratched his head for a long time and at last dictated.

"'My father,' or 'My dear father,' you have the right to put 'My dear father.'"

"I have written that."

"'I am at length at my uncle's house; at that of the oldest one, who has changed his name and become M. Saint-Godibert, the same as my Uncle Eustache, who is now M. Mondigo.' Put Saint-Godibert in big letters, underline Saint-Godibert."

"That is written."

"You have underlined Saint-Godibert. Very well. 'I have been received at his house with the greatest kindness.'"

Rose-Marie heaved a light sigh, but she wrote and waited.

"'The greatest kindness. His house is magnificent, there is a paper in the drawing-room that cost thirty-six francs a roll. He has four clerks and three servants.' Underline all that. 'He receives the best society of Paris. He bids me tell you that you need not put yourself out to come to see me.'"

"Why do you say that, monsieur?" cried Rose-Marie, ceasing to write.

"Because it suits me to say so, mademoiselle, — write, then, 'to come and see me. Journeys cost money, and you have not much, but my uncle will often permit me to come and see you.'"

"Oh, yes, monsieur, you will let me, won't you?" said Rose.

"Certainly, when my wife has nothing pressing for you to do. 'He will let me come often. Awaiting this, I kiss you, and remain ever your loving daughter,' and sign it. Ouf, I believe that's a fairly well dictated letter."

Rose-Marie had finished the letter, in which she would have liked to mention some other things to her father, but her uncle snatched the paper, which he examined, and nodded his head, saying,—

"Really now, that's very well written, a very English hand — I can't understand where they taught her to write like that. If I ever have pressing need you will be able to copy some letters for me."

"With pleasure, monsieur."

"Yes," said Angélique, "but I shall always have some work to give her. It seems she can make gowns — stays, and I continually have bodices to be enlarged."

"Be easy, the little one is entirely at your command, she will be delighted to do all she can to make herself useful."

"Of course, monsieur."

"I'm going to send this letter off, little one; as we have no company today you will have the honor of dining with us."

Up to dinner time the young girl had not left her chair nor ceased to work. From time to time

Madame Saint-Godibert came and inspected the work her niece was doing, then she returned to her room to try on a dress, or to her boudoir to anoint her face with a cosmetic for the skin. It was in such occupations as these that the superb Angélique ordinarily passed her days.

Mademoiselle Fifine went several times, under one pretext or another, into her mistress' room, although she had not been rung for.

She glanced curiously into the little room where Rose-Marie was working, and then said to her mistress, mockingly,—

"The young lady from the country will do queer-looking needlework, I'll be bound."

But Madame Saint-Godibert answered,—

"It is very good, indeed; it is exquisitely done, I am compelled to confess it. She outdoes you altogether, Fifine."

Then Mademoiselle Fifine went away biting her lips with anger, and in the antechamber she met François, who said,—

"I wonder where they have hidden that beautiful young girl? Have they shut her up in a closet somewhere?"

And Mademoiselle Fifine kicked François' ankle as she cried,—

"Come and ask me for anisette again, and you'll see if you get any!"

Dinner time came; Madame Saint-Godibert merely said to Rose-Marie,—

"Come, mademoiselle," and the young girl followed her aunt.

The table was laid for four. Madame Saint-Godibert seated herself near her husband and then she indicated a place to Rose-Marie, saying,—

"Sit there."

The poor little girl seated herself; she was embarrassed, constrained, and her heart was full.

François, who waited at table when there were no guests, smiled very graciously on perceiving Rose-Marie and exhibited very great alacrity in serving her.

"It is needless to put a cover for my son, he will not come down to dinner," said Saint-Godibert.

"Why not, my dear?"

"Because he is ill. I am sure he must have drunk too much punch yesterday."

But scarcely had the soup been served when Julien appeared. His indisposition had yielded to the desire to see his cousin, a desire which was increased by a note he had received from Frederic, in which the latter had written,—

Our cousin, Rose-Marie is modest and virtuous; Richard is a slanderer and I shall punish him; in the meantime I commend this charming child to you. I have just taken her to your parents.

Julien's features were dispirited; however, at the sight of Rose, a vivid red covered his cheeks, and he did not cease to look at her. He bowed low to her and she rose to return his salutation.

"Come, come, don't be so ceremonious," said Saint-Godibert, ill-temperedly; "be seated, Julien. You are no longer ill, then?"

"I'm a little better, father. And this is mademoiselle, who is — who is —"

"Yes, yes; this little girl is your relation. Well, François, what are you doing now? You're changing mademoiselle's plate before mine — are you a fool, François?"

"No, monsieur, but I thought you had still a bone to pick on your plate."

"A bone to pick! Is it possible that you conceive that to be a proper way to speak to your master!"

He scolded François well, who was very quick to serve Rose and very slow to wait on the others. For his part, the son of the house was very polite to his cousin and seemed to wish, by his attentions, to atone for the curt manner which his parents assumed towards her.

The dinner was very tiresome; the married couple did not open their mouths except to eat and to scold François, Julien was constrained and hardly dared look at his cousin, and the latter was sad and did not breathe a word. However, M. Saint-Godibert had noticed that his niece ate very little, and whispered to his wife,—

"She behaves well enough at the table."

The young girl was glad when they left the table, and at once returned to the smaller room

where a lamp had been placed. Julien watched her go without daring to stop and speak to her, although he had a great desire to do so. Then he drew near his father and said to him,—

"If you will allow me, hereafter, instead of going down to the office, I will work by myself in my room, it is more convenient for me. There I can be at my ease in my dressing-gown."

"Oh, that's a new idea. As to that, for what you have done lately at the office you need hardly give yourself the trouble of coming down there."

"Dernesty tells me it's much better form for one to work alone than to mix with his clerks."

"Oh, well, then, that's different. Don't come down."

The young man departed after giving another glance into the little room where his cousin was sewing. Rose-Marie worked until nine o'clock, then her aunt said to her,—

"You may go to your room and go to bed."

The poor little thing rose, bowed humbly to her aunt and uncle and left the apartment. At the staircase door she met François, who offered her a lamp, saying,—

"Wait, mamzelle, at least you can't go up without a light, it is embarrassing when one doesn't know the way about the house."

Rose-Marie thanked François with so sweet a voice that the servant was stupefied; then she took her lamp and went up to her attic chamber.

When she at last found herself alone and free from all constraint, the young girl sank into a chair, then she wept, and wept long, at length she knelt and prayed. As she rose she felt consoled and cried,—

"My God! give me courage to endure the loneliness I feel here! My father wished that I should come, believing that I should be happy here. I will wait, I will hope. And then if they let me go to see him, and I should tell him how I am here — we shall see then if he wishes me to remain. Oh, I am very sorry I came to Paris!"

There was at the bottom of the young girl's heart another sorrow, to which she gave a thought at this moment.

CHAPTER XIII

A Promenade. A Meeting. A Confidence

Upon leaving his Uncle Saint-Godibert's house on that eventful morning, Frederic's first care had been to repair to M. Richard's dwelling, for he was in haste to inflict condign punishment upon that gentleman for the infamous slanders he had dared to utter concerning Rose-Marie. Frederic wished to make him retract, to confess that he had outraged the young girl; but whatever excuse the pock-marked gentleman should offer, Rose's cousin promised himself to administer a correction which should deprive Richard of all desire to pose as a lady-killer. The young man dashed quickly into the house and was about to run upstairs when the porter hurried after him, calling,—

"Not quite so quick there, monsieur; wait, you will go up four flights of stairs for nothing."

"What, has he gone out?"

"You were going up to M. Richard's, weren't you, monsieur?"

"Of course, I was; you don't mean to tell me he isn't in?"

"He not only is not in, but he will not return, since he has moved."

"Moved, and since when has he moved?"

"Since this morning, in fact, he wasn't long about it; first of all, M. Richard rose this morning at daybreak, he was absent for more than an hour, and then returned with a furniture wagon, not very large, seeing that he hadn't much to move; he paid the term, which was not due, saying to me,—'I am going away, I am leaving; important reasons oblige me to go and lodge near the fortifications.' I said to him, 'But whereabouts?—for they have fortifications in so many neighborhoods. Are you going outside the inner wall?' and he answered me, 'If anyone asks you, you will say that you don't know.' Then he hurried his moving. Mercy! you ought to have seen, they even broke his bedside table, and he said, 'Much better, it was old, besides it's an unnecessary piece of furniture'; at length he started with his traps, telling me that he would come back in some days to know if there were any letters for him."

"The coward! he has left!" cried Frederic. "He has escaped because yesterday evening he heard some one speak about the young girl who was looking for her uncles, and he thought I should find her, that I should know whether he had told the truth. Porter, give me a pen and some paper, that I may write a word to M. Richard."

The porter hastened to give Frederic all that he asked for, and the latter dashed off the following epistle,—

RICHARD : — You are a blackguard and a clown, you have slandered an innocent girl to whom I am very nearly related. It is my duty to avenge her ; if you are not a coward as well as a liar, write and appoint a meeting with me. I will go with a witness. If you do not give me satisfaction, I warn you that every time I meet you I will throw your hat to the ground.

Frederic signed this letter, gave it to the porter with five francs, and asked him to be sure not to forget to give it to Richard when he came again.

After finishing this affair, Rose-Marie's cousin went slowly home, thinking of his pretty cousin, whose beautiful eyes and simple, innocent grace had already made him forget Madame Marmodin's piquant little face. When on the boulevard he felt himself softly slapped on the shoulder ; he turned, and saw Dernesty.

" What the devil are you thinking of Frederic ? — you are walking without looking before you. If you were an author like your Uncle Mondigo I should think you were laying the plot for a very tragic drama."

" No, I am not writing a play," said Frederic, smiling, " I am not lost in uncertainty, I am thinking of that which is real, positive ; you remember that pretty person, whose portrait was hidden by a curtain at a painter's where you came with us ? "

" Yes, very well."

" I have found her."

" Have you really ? "

" Didn't you hear that old man, who came

yesterday to my uncle's, M. Savenay, who was M. Cendrillon's friend, and had been robbed of sixty thousand francs in the forest of Fontainebleau?"

"Yes, yes, I heard something of what he said, but what has that to do with it?"

"This Papa Savenay, that is what they call him, said afterwards that he had come to ask M. Saint-Godibert if he by any chance, knew a M. Gogo, who had lived in his house, because a young girl in whom he was much interested could not find her uncles who bore that name."

"Yes, yes, now I think of it I remember that Richard said at the young painter's that the young girl at the railway was also looking for relations of that name."

"Yes, but what you don't know is what I am going to tell you, between ourselves, and that is that these Messieurs Gogo are really my two uncles."

"Is it possible?"

"Yes, my dear fellow, M. Saint-Godibert and M. Mondigo have thought fit to change their names, a little fancy which doesn't hurt anybody, a little vanity, self-love makes men do foolish things; but these two are the Gogos for whom the young girl was looking, so I need not tell you that she is my cousin."

"I am not astonished that you flamed out in her defence at Leopold Bercourt's."

"You can understand that this morning, very early, I went to this good old man's, whose address I had kept."

"Oh, you went to him."

"First of all I saw him alone. He was unaware of the fact that I was a cousin of his protégé; I made him explain how he had come to know her, met her, and I have had proofs, yes, proofs, that Richard is nothing but a miserable, unworthy liar, for it was in flying from him, it was in escaping, alone at night, in Paris, to hide herself from his pursuit, that the poor little thing was found by an honest man who had travelled with us on the railroad, and who took her to Papa Savenay's house, which she has not left since that time."

"And what did you do then?"

"Hang it, that's simple enough; I took my cousin to my Uncle Saint-Godibert's house; they were a little unwilling at first, but now she is living with them. O my dear fellow, I shall go very often to see my Aunt Angélique, for my cousin is very pretty; I assure you, that her picture did not flatter her."

"Indeed, but you pique my curiosity. I also should like to see this marvel of grace and beauty."

"Will you come now? It won't trouble me in the least to go to my uncle's house; come, you can say that you come on some banking business. By Jove, why not?"

Dernesty took Frederic's arm to accompany him, and while walking he said to him,—

"And this old goodman, who had received your cousin, what has become of him?"

"Oh, you may well believe that I have looked after him. It was only just that the old man should be recompensed for his generosity, especially as he had been so unfortunate as to be robbed. I took him to my uncle's and made him give him a place in his office."

"In your uncle's office?"

"Yes, a little place, but he is not ambitious, this poor Papa Savenay, he is contented with little."

"Then he is now employed at M. Saint-Godibert's?"

"Undoubtedly; I left him there this morning. He entered on his duties immediately."

Dernesty took a few more steps with Frederic, then suddenly he stopped, exclaiming,—

"How heedless I am, I can't go with you, I have an appointment today at that young painter's, a sitting I promised him, so I must leave you. I will go some other time to see your charming cousin."

"As you will, but since you are going to see M. Leopold, who defended Rose-Marie so warmly against Richard, you will do me a favor if you will tell that young man that he was right in defending her, that Richard is a hound, and that she

whose portrait he painted still deserves his esteem. You will tell him all that?"

"Yes, yes, I will tell him."

"Don't fail to do so, for we must not allow Richard's unworthy attempt to still injure my cousin."

"Be easy as to that, I will do your commission."

"I will say good day to you, then, and when you see Rose-Marie you will judge if she is not worthy of one's interest."

The young men parted. In place of going to Leopold's, as he had said, Dernesty went to walk in a solitary path of the Champs-Élysées, and he seemed to abandon himself to serious reflection; as to Frederic, after walking some hundred steps, he reflected that it would probably be unwise to return the same day to see Rose-Marie, and that such great eagerness towards her on his part might injure her with his uncle and aunt. He therefore decided for her sake to be reasonable, and to defer his visit until the next day. On the morrow, however, in the middle of the day, Frederic did not fail to go to Saint-Godibert's. He did not pause in the office, but went immediately up to his aunt. Mademoiselle Fifine smiled on seeing the handsome nephew, he also having been accustomed to indulge in a little mild flirtation with her, but this time the young man did not dream of stopping to speak to the maid-servant; he

immediately entered the drawing-room, believing that he should find his cousin there, and was greatly displeased to see only his aunt. After saying a few words, with the air of being bored, Frederic could contain himself no longer and exclaimed,—

"But where is my cousin?"

"Why, she is in the place where she is working," answered Madame Saint-Godibert, dryly. "You undoubtedly did not think that I should place that little thing in my drawing-room?"

"And why not, aunt?"

"Because that is not the place for a young girl, if we wish to take proper care of her; a relation in our house, it is not fitting that young men, gallants, lovers, should come prowling around her, that would be pretty; if anything like that happened we should very quickly have to send her back to her village."

Frederic tore his gloves with anger, then, after a moment, he took his departure, and in passing through the antechamber he did not even look at Fifine, who exclaimed,—

"Oh, how vexed he looked, it seems that he didn't come to see his aunt. But what do all these gentlemen see in that little country girl?—she has no more figure than my fist. Mercy, some men have poor taste!"

It was not upon Frederic alone that the charms of Rose-Marie had produced their effect. Young

Julien, who had very often dined outside before his cousin was established with his parents, was now very prompt at mealtimes. He talked little with Rose-Marie, because they never left him alone with her, he paid her a thousand kindly attentions, and when his parents were not looking he glanced at his cousin less timidly than usual.

But Rose-Marie, while touched by Julien's politeness, did not feel for him that sympathy and affection which she had immediately experienced for Frederic. On the contrary, when Julien was near her she seemed to feel a secret repulsion, a sentiment of terror which she could not conquer, although she was ignorant of the cause of it.

A fortnight had elapsed since Rose-Marie had come to her uncle's; the time had passed very slowly to her, her whole day was occupied in working in the little room which adjoined Madame Saint-Godibert's boudoir. From the time of her return there, after dinner, up to the moment that they allowed her to go up to her room, the poor child saw no one but her aunt or Mademoiselle Fifine. The first spoke to her in a dry and disdainful tone, and the other, in looking at her, pretended to put out her tongue and to smile mockingly. During dinner the presence of her uncle and her cousin did not make it any gayer, for the one never noticed her, and the hidden attentions of the other were more embarrassing than agreeable to her.

Never going out or partaking of any amusement, Jerome's daughter passed her days very sadly in this Paris where her father had sent her in the hope that she would be happier than in the village. The only desire of Rose-Marie was to go back to her father, that she might beg of him to keep her with him and not to send her back to her uncles. Once already the young girl had timidly spoken of her father and said that she should like to go and see him, but her aunt had answered curtly,—

"There is no hurry for that, mademoiselle; you have plenty of time. It seems to me that you would like incessantly to be making long journeys, but that is not fitting. Your father knows that you are with us, it seems to me that he should be very well pleased; it is not necessary for you to go back and disturb him."

Rose-Marie dared not answer, but she asked Heaven to give her patience and resignation.

To explain this change in Madame Saint-Godibert's opinions — who at first did not wish to receive her niece at her house, and who was now opposed to her going to see her father — one should know that Rose-Marie worked very skillfully and with much taste, that her aunt had realized that the young girl would stand to her in the place of two good workwomen and that, in consequence, far from being an onerous charge, it was a point of economy to keep her. M. Saint-

Godibert had also remarked that his niece ate very little. He had learned from Mademoiselle Fifine that she had brought a trunk full of clothing, and had no fear of having to buy anything for her for a long time, but as the young girl cost almost nothing and saved them a good deal by her work, her rich relations, who had the parsimony common to nearly all parvenus, counted now on keeping her with them as long as possible. It is in this manner that so many people practice benevolence and generosity.

While Rose-Marie passed her days so sadly in the apartment on the first story, the presence of the new employee had, on the contrary, added cheerfulness on the groundfloor. Always satisfied with his fate, knowing how to content himself with the little which he earned, Papa Savenay had very quickly become familiar with the duties which he was called on to perform. Obliged to go out many times during the day, he gayly took his broad-brimmed hat and started off without murmuring; still as light, as nimble as a young man, he took less time than another to do an errand because he did not loiter on the way. Finally, M. Boudin and the two clerks, who had been ill-humored at his admission into the office, now showed themselves very well satisfied at having him with them, and treated him with a kindness extremely rare in employees towards their inferiors. Papa Savenay had not lost his taste for

song, and above all for his dear songster, and when work was not pressing, and when mending his pen, the old man hummed a refrain from Béranger, which made the other clerks, who were astonished that at his age the good man should still possess such a clear, correct voice, smile.

But one day M. Saint-Godibert, who had fallen asleep in his private room while reading his paper, had been awakened by Papa Savenay, who was gayly singing,—

Zon ! flute et basse,
Zon, violon,
Zon, flute et basse,
Et violon, zon, zon !

The banker came out of his room, furious, exclaiming,—

"Who is it who dares to sing thus, in my offices," and old Papa Savenay answered, very quietly,—

"It was me, monsieur, does it disturb you?"

"Does it disturb me? why, certainly, monsieur, it has disturbed me in a most important business. Here for two hours past I have had humming in my ears,—'Zon, zon, et, violon,'—I could not believe that it came from my offices, I believed that my clerks were too well trained to sing. Fie, what bad taste, what bad form! and it was you, Papa Savenay, who presumed to sing, with your—'Zon, zon, flute et basse—'"

"But, monsieur, it is one of Béranger's songs!"

"What does it matter to me, monsieur, do you suppose I know him?"

"Why, monsieur, all Europe knows him, his songs and himself."

"Monsieur, Europe may do what it pleases, and, whether your song be one of Béranger's or one of Corneille's, I am master in my own offices and I will not have anyone sing there; at the first zon — zon — which comes out of your mouth I will put you out of the door."

The good old man inclined his head in silence. Since that time he had not sung at the office, but he indemnified himself for it morning and evening at home. However, good Savenay was astonished at never seeing Rose-Marie go in or come out of the house; knowing that she was at her uncle's, and working himself on the groundfloor, he had hoped sometimes to see this young girl, for whom he bore the most sincere affection. He desired above all to know if she were happy, if her relations treated her as she deserved to be treated. All these thoughts were passing through the old man's head when one morning on arriving at his office first, according to his usual custom, for the employees who are paid the least are always the promptest, he met under the vestibule of the staircase François, who was carrying something. The servant smiled at the old man, saying as he showed him a jar of cream,—

"This is for the pretty young lady you brought

here one day, their niece; those others won't call her their niece, but I know very well that she is their niece. Heavens! what a sweet young person, such an amiable prepossessing appearance."

"You know Rose-Marie?" answered Papa Savenay. "Ah, so much the better; speak to me of that dear child, for I have not seen her once since she has been at her uncle's house."

"Hang it! I well believe it. That poor young girl never stirs during the day from a little room where they make her work without relaxation; after dinner she works again until she goes up to bed. Do you know my old goodman, I have an idea that she amuses herself like a bird whose feathers they have pulled out."

"What, you think, oh, it would be too bad if they didn't make her happy, she is so sweet, so interesting."

"As for me, I do all that I can to render her little services, for instance, I am taking up this jar of cream which I shall place before her door, and she thinks it is the milkwoman who puts it there, for she would not allow me to put myself out; but if I did not take her the cream I know Mademoiselle Fifine, the maid-servant — when all the milk is taken upstairs — will commence by drinking half of the little one's jar."

"You love Rose-Marie, that's well, my friend, you are a good fellow."

"Why, yes, I am a very good fellow. Listen,

aged man, you must not bear a grudge against me if the other evening, when they had company here, I wished to show you the door, it was by monsieur's orders."

"Oh, I bear you no grudge, my good fellow, but if you can allow me to say two kindly words to my young friend, you will do me a great favor, for I am sure she would be pleased to see me."

"That's very easy, go up this little staircase, and right at the top — for the matter of that come with me, I'll go up and show you the door of the room."

"Really, you think that I can? They won't scold her if they learn — "

"Why should they? That would be a stupid thing to do. Do you think they will take you for a lover?"

"Oh, no, in that way I shall not compromise her."

"Besides at this hour the master and mistress are still sleeping like moles, I am very sure that mademoiselle is awake and up early. Come with me, old man, and nobody shall know that she has received a visitor."

Papa Savenay followed François up. They soon arrived at the door of the room where Rose-Marie slept. The old man knocked softly.

"Who is there?" demanded the young girl.

"Me, my child, your old friend, Papa Savenay."

A joyful exclamation was heard, and the door

opened immediately. The old man went into Rose-Marie's room, and François returned into his, cutting a few of his extraordinary capers as he said to himself,—

"Come, now, how's that? Neither known nor seen by the others, not even by Fifine, who would cut off one of her ears if, by that means, the other could hear all that took place in the house."

Rose-Marie felt a keen joy at the sight of her old friend, but the latter experienced a painful feeling on noticing that the young girl had already lost her lively color and the appearance of health she had worn when he had accompanied her to her uncle's. He pressed her hand in his and begged her to confide her troubles to him, to tell him how she was treated in her relatives' house.

Rose-Marie told the good old man how her days were passed, and she did not hide the loneliness which she experienced in her new life.

"Why, how is this?" said Papa Savenay, "no distraction, no pleasure? Can one exist thus at your age? Never to go out, that is contrary to health. A flower which does not receive the air becomes blanched and quickly loses its freshness. A young girl is a flower also, and I can see well by your face that you, who have been used to the free life of the country, suffer from being constantly shut up in a room. You must go out, my child, and since your relations are afraid to show themselves with you, which, between ourselves is not

to their credit, you must go out without them. For instance, in the mornings before they are up, what is to prevent your going for a little walk on the boulevards?"

"Oh, my friend, I should never dare to go out alone; I don't know Paris and I should be afraid of losing myself."

"Alone! that would not be proper, in fact; but with me there can be no harm, so tomorrow I shall come and get you. What time do you usually go down?"

"They never call me in the morning before half-past nine."

"Well, at seven o'clock I shall knock at your door, and we will go for a walk; provided I am at the office before half-past eight it will be all right, the others never come before that. So tomorrow morning, that's understood."

"What, my dear protector you will come for me?—but if they should learn it?—if they should scold me?"

"We are not committing a crime, my child, I take it all on myself, for I feel like a father towards you, and before everything I wish that you should not fall ill."

Rose-Marie consented, for, at the bottom of her heart, she asked nothing better. She promised to be ready the following morning at seven o'clock, and Papa Savenay departed very joyfully, allowing himself in going downstairs, despite the fact

that he had been forbidden to do so, to hum between his teeth,—

> Some happy days, in spite of time,
> May each one add to round his prime.

The next morning the old man was as prompt as a young lover; at seven o'clock he rapped softly at Rose-Marie's door, the latter appeared, adorned with a little bonnet which rendered her still prettier, if that were possible. The two descended the stairs, being careful to make no noise. They were soon out of the house, and the young girl breathed more freely; she passed her arm within that of her conductor and they started on their walk, directing their steps towards the boulevards. The weather was cold, but fine, the two friends felt happy in being together, and free to talk without the embarrassment engendered by the presence of stern relatives. Rose-Marie did not hide from the good Savenay the plan which she had formed of returning to her father and not coming back to Paris. The old man, while understanding the loneliness which the young girl experienced, bade her take patience, for he was fully persuaded that her uncle and aunt would end by treating her with more friendliness.

In their enjoyment of their morning walk the old man and the young girl found that an hour passed very quickly. Eight o'clock struck and they were at the entrance of the Champs-Élysées.

"We must return," said Rose-Marie, "for fear of being late."

"You are right," answered Savenay, "for we can, I hope, often take these little walks, which will do you a great deal of good."

The two turned to retrace their way. At this moment, a young man was coming towards them; he approached, and Rose-Marie, who had raised her head, felt her heart beat fast as she looked at him. Soon the young man, who was quite near them, paused, and looked at the young girl. He became pale and disturbed, but suddenly, as if repenting of a momentary weakness, he departed, casting on Rose-Marie a cold and almost disdainful glance.

"My God — my God! Why, it is he!" cried the young girl, then she turned, in the hope that he had not gone. But Leopold, for it was he, had doubled his pace, and was already far from the one who had experienced so much pleasure in seeing him again. This pleasure soon changed to pain, which happens frequently in love. Rose-Marie, who could not understand Leopold's conduct, murmured in a trembling voice,—

"Why, it was surely he, and he said nothing to me. Certainly he must have known me, oh, yes, he looked at me very hard and suddenly his look became cold, unkind; my God! what does that mean? — What have I done that he should be vexed with me?"

Papa Savenay, who had seen all that had taken place, said to Rose-Marie,—

"What is the matter, my child? — Do you know that young man? — he who passed by you."

"Oh, yes, my good friend."

"Is he still another of your cousins?"

"No, my good friend; but, all the same, I was so pleased to see him again, and he looked as though he were vexed with me."

"You have never spoken to me of this young man, my daughter; you could not have made his acquaintance in Paris."

"No, my good friend, that is — oh, wait, I haven't been able to tell you that yet, but today I am going to tell you everything, as I should have told my father, for I see now that no one should have secrets from her father."

"In fact, my child, it would be much better not to have them, and as fathers have been young themselves, they should also be indulgent; speak, my child."

Rose-Marie related to her old friend how she had made acquaintance with the young painter in the forest of Fontainebleau, how his frank manners, his modesty, his sweet and polished language had won her confidence; and how she had consented to let him paint her portrait, and, finally, all that they had said in those interviews, the confession that the young man had made of

his love, and the vows he had made, before leaving her, that he would return.

The old man listened to Rose without interrupting her. He looked closely at her, and he saw well from the expression of her eyes that she had hidden nothing from him, that this love was pure and virtuous. He answered her, smiling,—

"Come, my child, the harm is not very great; certainly, you will have to tell all this to your father; but no doubt you were waiting until the young man should come back, to tell him?"

"Yes, my good friend, and he did not come."

"You see that one must not believe too easily in the words of young men. He will, perhaps, have forgotten you."

"However, my good friend, I have not forgotten him, for since that time I have always thought of him."

"That is no reason why he should have done the same by you, the heart of a man is not the same as that of a woman, although there is much resemblance."

"But, my friend, M. Leopold has perhaps been to Avon since I came to Paris."

"That might be."

"Then why, when he met me just now, should he not have said good-day to me? — Why that indifferent look? — oh, more than that, there was almost scorn in his eyes. How have I deserved that? — I who felt so happy on seeing him again.

Oh, it was very unkind to have looked at me like that, and to have passed me without speaking."

Rose-Marie put her handkerchief to her eyes to hide the tears with which they were filled. Papa Savenay pressed her arm, saying,—

"Come, come, my child, what does this mean? —sorrow, tears, for a young man whom you should have forgotten. Come, come, have courage, a little pride; remember that you deserved to be loved before giving your love."

"But, my good friend, since I have given it I can't take it back."

"Indeed, my child, these things are not irreparable — but here we are at your uncle's house, dry your tears, have patience, be submissive; but if, however, you are too lonely in Paris, if you absolutely wish to return to your father's house—"

"Oh, no, no, my good friend, I believe that I shall get used to being at my uncle's; we shall go for a walk tomorrow morning, shall we not?"

"Yes, my child, I shall be at your orders."

"Oh, how good you are to me."

They were at the banker's, Rose-Marie went up to her room, the old man to the office.

CHAPTER XIV

A Violet in a Flower Bed

But now let us leave Paris for awhile, and all our friends there, and take a little flight to the small village of Avon and our friend Jerome, and see if we cannot ascertain how it comes about that the good farmer, who loved his only daughter so tenderly, had not given her any news of himself after the letter she had written and despatched to him on recovering from her severe illness. As so tender a father cannot be accused of indifference, we shall surely find that he had some very good reason for his conduct, incomprehensible as it may appear.

Rose-Marie's departure had greatly grieved Jerome; it had been necessary for him to make a great and courageous effort in order to part with his child at all; and if he had not wept before her it was because he felt convinced that if his daughter saw his tears she would not consent to leave him; and, as he thought it better that she should go, as he wished to assure a happy future for her and thought that this could be more surely attained by sending her to her uncles, he had hidden from her all his sorrow.

The first days which followed the young girl's departure were passed very sadly in the farmer's cottage, but by incessant work one may find distraction from all sorrows. Jerome sought it in this way, and after he came in from his work, and rested by his fireside, he chatted of his daughter with old Manon; he spoke of her incessantly, saying,—

"She ought to be loved down there also, everybody loved her here so much."

And Manon said likewise, and dwelt on all that could console him.

One day, however, on returning from his fields Jerome had been very much surprised to learn from his servant that a handsome young fellow, dressed like a city man, had come to ask for his daughter, that on learning that she had gone to Paris he had been very much surprised, very grieved, that he had gone without saying anything and without wishing to speak to the father of her whom he appeared to know.

The good countryman had made no end of conjectures as to this visit; then he had ended by saying that this young man might have seen his daughter at Fontainebleau, where she had gone to work sometimes; that he had perhaps come from there to inquire how she was, and that learning of her departure for Paris he had thought that the object of his visit was accomplished. Jerome had troubled himself no further about the matter,

he had too much confidence in his daughter to suspect anything culpable in her acquaintance with the young stranger.

But days and then weeks passed by, and Jerome received no news from Paris and no letter from Rose-Marie. He often said to himself, "If her uncles had not received her well, she would have returned to me." However, his daughter's silence astonished him and began to make him uneasy. Jerome should have received at this time the letter which she had written him on recovering from her illness, and in which she had given him her address at Papa Savenay's. He had seen nothing of it, however, and this is the reason; one must remember that Désiré Glureau, inspector of sweeping, was at Papa Savenay's when Rose was closing her letter to her father, that she had confided it to him and begged him to be sure and put it in the post, and that the former button-maker had received the commission with pleasure, saying,—

"There is nothing easier, in Paris there are letter posts at all the corners."

But things which are the easiest to do are often those which one fails in doing, because in carrying them out one does not think it necessary to take much care.

On leaving Papa Savenay's house, Glureau had met his young friend, M. Féroce; the latter, who the evening before had received what he called a

gift, in selling some checks before the Theâtré de la Folies-Dramatiques, had proposed to his new friend to regale himself with a quarter of a pint. Glureau was a good fellow, but it was difficult for him to refuse a glass of wine; the first quarter of a pint had been followed by another and then another, until these gentlemen had put more measures than they could count down their gullets. Then somebody had come to look for the inspector of sweeping, who had inspected nothing at all since the morning. On running off to his duty, Glureau had drawn the letter from his coat pocket, exclaiming,—

"Oh, hang it! I had forgotten to put this letter in the post."

"Give it to me," said M. Féroce. "Go to your business; I can put that in the post."

The man with the plaited hat had given the letter to his young friend, and the latter had returned to his drinking until he was completely intoxicated, and then, wishing to light his pipe, he made use of the letter which was in his hand without knowing from whence he had obtained it. And this was why Jerome had received no letter from his daughter.

General rule: When you have written a letter of any importance take the trouble to post it yourself, for if others are negligent or forgetful you may be quite certain that they will never tell you of it.

Jerome had become extremely uneasy, he was about to start for Paris when at length a letter came to him.

It was that which Rose had written to her father under the dictation of her Uncle Saint-Godibert.

Jerome had found this letter very singular in style, he could not understand how his brothers Nicolas and Eustache had been transformed into Saint-Godibert and Mondigo; but at any rate his daughter had told him that her uncles had received her with the greatest kindness, and that was the principal thing for him. Thereafter he was easy about Rose-Marie's welfare, and did not take in bad part his brother's recommendation that he should not put himself out to go and see his daughter, saying to himself,—

"She will come herself, the dear child, she will be very much pleased to make a little trip into the country to see her flowers, her garden. But as long as she is with her uncle and they have received her well — she is dear to them already, I'll wager — I can now be tranquil and need not imagine anything to make me uneasy."

One can readily understand that reasoning thus, on the receipt of this letter Jerome gave up all idea of going to Paris. While all this was going on in the village, Rose-Marie's presence had almost caused a revolution at M. Saint-Godibert's. First of all, the son of the house no longer dined out, preferring to dine every day with his cousin.

In the evening he would willingly have remained in to keep her company, had his parents permitted him, but Madame Saint-Godibert would not allow any man except her husband to go into the little room where her niece, Rose-Marie, was working.

The handsome nephew also made frequent visits to his uncle, he was there during the day, he returned there during the evening, but they never received him in the room occupied by the pretty worker. Frederic avenged himself for all that by speaking constantly of his cousin, asking news of her, and the dry responses which his aunt made could not close his mouth.

And then, despite the watchfulness of Mademoiselle Fifine, and his master's orders, François found means to pay the young girl a thousand little attentions, which she repaid by a gracious smile, for which the Norman valet would have flogged his master, had Rose-Marie appeared to wish it.

The Saint-Godiberts noticed what was going on. Monsieur said, sometimes,—

"This little girl's beautiful eyes are turning everybody's head; I verily believe that if we would allow our son to do so he would fall in love with Rose-Marie, but we are here to watch over him. Let him look at that young girl from a distance as much as he wishes, he shall never marry any other than a rich woman; I have much hope of Mademoiselle Soufflat."

"To think of marrying the daughter of that countryman," exclaimed the fat Angélique, shrugging her shoulders, "Julien would have to be very common in his tastes. And there's Frederic constantly talking about his cousin. He comes here at all times in the day, in the hope of seeing her; in truth, these young men are fools."

"There is one way of putting a stop to all that, my dear; and that is to send this little girl back to her father."

"That is admitted, but this Rose-Marie is very useful to me, she sews like an angel. She has fitted my bodices in such a manner that I have the waist of a wasp; why should we send her away? It suffices that we know how to watch her."

"Let it be so, my dear; but since she has been here we have not given any large parties, I don't, however, wish that her presence should prevent us from receiving our fine company."

"That need not restrain us in any way, monsieur, for upon that day Rose-Marie shall pass the whole evening in her room."

Some days after this conversation there was a large party at M. Saint-Godibert's; he had greatly increased the number of his invitations, because for a long time he had not invited anyone.

Frederic had been delighted on receiving an invitation to his uncle's, for he was sure that at length he should see his cousin at the party.

Julien, however, did not flatter himself with this hope, because he saw every day how careful they were to keep his cousin to herself; however, he thought they would leave Rose-Marie in the room where she ordinarily worked, and that, favored by the numerous duties devolving upon his father and mother as host and hostess, he should be able to pass some moments near his cousin.

M. Dernesty, who was as usual amongst those invited, and who had not appeared at the banker's house since his last party, decided to go, and the desire to see this very pretty young girl, of whom Frederic had said so much, had some influence in determining his resolution.

As to Uncle Mondigo, who had not seen his niece since the day she had been brought to his brother's house, he knew the latter too well not to be certain that Rose-Marie would not be present at the party, and affirmed it in confidence to his wife, who said to him,—

"If I knew I should see your niece at your brother's I declare to you, monsieur, I would not go, because I cannot expose myself at my age to being called aunt by a great girl of seventeen years."

During the whole of the day which preceded the memorable evening, Rose-Marie had helped Mademoiselle Fifine in the preparations for the party. The maid-servant had kept saying, in a mocking tone,—

"Oh, how fine it will be this evening, there will be so many elegant people, bejewelled women, they will partake of such good things; but of course it will be a choice gathering, they do not receive everybody."

But Rose-Marie was very indifferent to all these hints; her aunt had already told her that she must go upstairs immediately after dinner, and far from being afflicted thereat the young girl had received the order joyfully. She did not at all regret that she was not to be numbered with the people whom they were expecting; she thought that in the midst of this fine society she should be too much embarrassed, and she preferred to be alone that she might freely devote her thoughts to Leopold; whom she hoped with all her heart to meet again, and who, or so she dared to think, would not again pass by her without speaking.

At nine o'clock in the evening the drawing-rooms were lighted, the master and mistress of the house in full dress, the domestics at their posts. Presently the company arrived. It was composed of nearly all the persons whom we saw at the grand dinner party, and of some new faces which had never been seen there before.

M. Soufflat was there with his daughter, whose nose, unfortunately, had not diminished; Madame Doguin, with her husband and his too-evident feet; the frisky Francine came with her husband, who was entirely engrossed with matters pertain-

ing to the Romans; Major Krouteberg presented himself with that air of good fellowship which made him welcome to everybody; M. Cendrillon with his accustomed unceremonious air; and M. Roquet, who, while acquiring age, was still more eager to make conquests, showed himself in a toilet worthy of a lion of the modern Athens; last came brother "literary man," bringing his blond wife. Clémence glanced around the room to see whether she had not a niece to fear, while her husband took possession of M. Doguin to recite for him the plot of a play which he projected.

On coming into the drawing-room Julien was not surprised that he did not see his pretty cousin there, but on perceiving the boudoir of his mother lighted, as well as the little room where Rose-Marie ordinarily worked, he had some doubts as to whether she was not downstairs, and after assuring himself that she was not, he returned to the drawing-room in a very ill-humor.

Dernesty did not defer his arrival; his manner lacked a little of its usual assurance when he came into M. Saint-Godibert's drawing-room which, however, it soon regained, and when he had looked at all the women whom he found at the party, he approached Julien and whispered to him,—

"Where is this charming cousin of whom Frederic has spoken to me?"

"They didn't allow her to come down," answered Julien.

"The devil! that's very vexatious, for it was principally to see her that I came; inasmuch as I don't greatly care now to frequent this house — you understand why."

"Hush, hold your tongue," answered Julien, looking anxiously around him, "if anyone should hear you."

"Hang it! I advise you to talk. What I said just now meant nothing, while as for you, you made me ashamed the other evening. When one doesn't know how to restrain himself before people he should not come where they are."

"If you knew what I suffered that evening on recognizing — "

"Enough, enough, he will not show here, I hope."

"No, never!"

"Not that we can have anything to fear, but of course it would be tiresome to have to associate with him."

"Oh, if I could have foreseen that one day — "

"That's enough, why don't you stop! here's Frederic."

The big young man came into the room, he greeted all the ladies, and notably Madame Marmodin, who looked somewhat piqued because for sometime past he had been less impressive and assiduous in his attentions to her. Then Frederic looked on all sides of the room and his lips became compressed and his brow lowered. Pres-

ently, perceiving his cousin and Dernesty, he went straight to them, resuming his cheerful look.

"Well, you see she's not here," said Dernesty.

"They told her to stay upstairs in her room this evening," murmured Julien, sighing.

"And I only came here that I might see her," said Dernesty.

Frederic leaned towards them and whispered to them,—

"Have patience, you shall see her."

"What! she will come here this evening?"

"Yes."

"It's not possible!"

"I am not sure of that."

"You will go and look for her in her room then?"

"No, not I, but someone who can do it much better than I."

"Will it be that old man, Papa Savenay?" demanded Julien, changing color.

"Why, no, much better than that, it's some one whom I have taken pains to tell that our Uncle Jerome's daughter was in this house, and whom I warned that they would also have a grand party here, for I doubted whether they would invite him."

"And this some one?"

"Silence, here he is."

The door of the drawing-room opened; Cousin Brouillard appeared. In place of being attired

entirely in black, according to his custom when he came to a great party at the Saint-Godibert's, Cousin Brouillard wore his usual everyday dress; a maroon coat which was far from being new, a waistcoat which was old-fashioned, and brown pantaloons, guiltless of straps. Madame Saint-Godibert stifled an exclamation on seeing their cousin come in. She looked at her husband as if she wanted to say to him,—

"Were you stupid enough to invite him?"

Saint-Godibert who perfectly understood this pantomime, said in a low tone,—

"No, certainly I didn't invite him; it must have been the devil that told him that we had company this evening; and to come here in that state, it's outrageous."

However, Brouillard, who knew well that he should find company, since Frederic had told him previously, passed to the middle of the drawing-room, towards M. Saint-Godibert, shouting at the top of his voice,—

"Why, good evening, cousin; why, hang it, I didn't know that you had company this evening. I came in quite unceremoniously. Why did you not notify me as usual? Cousin Angélique, I have the honor to wish you good evening; have you been ill?"

"And why should I have been ill, monsieur?" answered Angélique, sourly.

"Why, you are not looking well this evening.

Oh, as for that there is no reason, one may look as you do all the time, one may have a yellow tinge and still be very well."

Madame Saint-Godibert almost had a nervous attack, but she dared not answer; on the contrary, she tried to smile, although it was impossible for her to accomplish her desire.

"Oh, here is Cousin Mondigo and his estimable wife!" and Brouillard rested on the word estimable, as though he had said it with intention. After greeting the literary man and his wife, and the ladies present with whom he was already acquainted, Cousin Brouillard returned to the middle of the drawing-room, and there, being artful enough to avail himself of a momentary silence, he cried,—

"By the way, where is this charming person, this pretty little cousin who is living with you now, or so I have been told?"

Saint-Godibert and his wife became purple. Mondigo hung down his head; Clémence listened with uneasiness. Cousin Brouillard went on, still talking very loud,—

"Why, Cousin Saint-Godibert, it's a very good action that you've done there; your modesty makes you redden, but good actions are so rare that they should not be hid."

"What! has M. Saint-Godibert done a good action?" said M. Soufflat with an air of astonishment, balancing himself on his tiptoes.

"Yes, monsieur, a very meritorious action."

"Come, hold your tongue, Cousin Brouillard," said M. Saint-Godibert, "don't speak about that."

"Pardon me, I must tell everybody that you have received into your house a young niece who is entirely without fortune, and that you and your wife treat this young girl as if she was your own child. As to that, it is not strange, for she is so pretty. Where could anyone find a more ravishing creature than this Rose-Marie, one rarely sees so many attractions united."

The men had gathered around M. Brouillard with much interest, and M. Cendrillon tapped M. Saint-Godibert on the chest, saying to him, with the voice of a stentor,—

"So we do these sort of things and we hide them, hey?—That's all right, I like anyone who has a generous heart, but where is she, this little marvel that your cousin is talking about? You are going to let us see her, I hope?"

M. Saint-Godibert murmured some words which meant nothing.

Angèlique said hastily,—

"Our young relation is upstairs, in the room that we have given her, but she cannot yet present herself in society; you can understand that a young girl who has lived in the country would be too awkward, too shy in company."

"By Jove, what does that matter?" resumed M. Cendrillon. "I am very fond of awkward

women, timid women, unfortunately they become every day more rare; oh, you must let us see your little niece."

"We shall be very indulgent in our opinion of her," said M. Dernesty; "but if she is really as pretty as M. Brouillard says, she will have no need that we should be so."

"That is to say," resumed M. Brouillard, "that when I had the pleasure of seeing her in the country I was stupefied with admiration."

"The devil!" said M. Roquet, "why, you redouble our desire to see this young person."

Clémence, who had not spoken as yet, now said with ill-disguised spite,—

"These gentlemen do not understand that M. Brouillard is mocking us, he is making a portrait for us the original of which does not exist."

"Doesn't exist, cousin," said M. Brouillard, "I think you ought to know the contrary, for you are this charming person's aunt."

Clémence grew pale, fidgeted, bit her lips, and answered with a disdainful air,—

"Oh, her aunt, what a joke, that is to say, my husband is her uncle, but I am nothing at all to her."

"Pardon me, cousin, one is always aunt to one's husband's niece. Are not Frederic and Julien your nephews, then?"

"Oh, they are men, that is very different."

"If you could know Rose-Marie," said Fred-

eric, "I am sure that you would be the first to render her justice."

"Rose-Marie, oh, what a pretty name," cried M. Roquet.

"See here, we demand to see the little beauty; don't we gentlemen?" resumed M. Cendrillon.

"Yes, yes."

"How complimentary these gentlemen are," said Francine, laughing, "they seem to think we are unworthy of their regard, as if they had never seen a pretty face before."

"You cannot believe that, ladies," answered Frederic. "Why, when one is in the midst of a flower garden it is not forbidden to add one more flower to it."

All the ladies took this compliment to themselves; the two aunts only continued to look sullen. To settle matters, M. Cendrillon went to Madame Saint-Godibert, and said to her,—

"Come, mamma, you are going to make this little girl come down to us, are you not?"

Fat Angélique would have preferred to receive a blow on the head to being called "mamma"; however, she restrained herself, and answered,—

"I am unable to gratify your wish, gentlemen, for our protégé has only the clothes she brought with her from the country and she cannot show herself with those in my drawing-room; they would form too striking a contrast among all these ladies."

"On the contrary they would be more piquant, would they not, gentlemen?"

"Undoubtedly."

"She wears perhaps the 'laspissa' or the 'cerinum'; her head is perhaps adorned with the 'calantica,' or the 'calyptra,'" cried M. Marmodin, "I feel very curious to verify them."

"Come, come," resumed M. Brouillard, "I see that everybody desires to know my young cousin, and that her generous relations themselves will be flattered in presenting her to the company; well, then, I shall go myself and look for her."

"Cousin, it's useless, she will not come down," cried Angélique.

"You don't know which is her room," said Saint-Godibert.

But M. Brouillard did not listen, he had already left the drawing-room, exclaiming,—

"Oh, I shall find her easily enough."

In the antechamber, François, who had probably listened to all that was said in the drawing-ing room, ran to M. Brouillard, saying,—

"Come, monsieur, I will take you up and show you Mamzelle Rose's room."

Jerome's daughter was alone in her sloping-ceiled room, but she was less lonely there since she had seen the young painter. Why was it that this meeting, in which Leopold appeared so cold and indifferent to her, should have re-animated her heart and her courage? It was that in seeing

again him whom she loved, she no longer felt herself alone in Paris; it was because in secret she still preserved the hope of meeting Leopold again; finally, it was because that love which causes us tears and suffering also prevents us from feeling lonely, and successful love does not always have the same effect.

Rose-Marie worked at her embroidery, dreaming of the young painter and still questioning herself as to why he had not even addressed to her one word of politeness, when she heard several raps at her door, and a voice which cried,—

"It's me, Cousin Brouillard, will you open the door to me?"

Almost at the same time, François said,—

"Don't be afraid, Mademoiselle Rose-Marie, it is one of your relations who has come to see you."

Rose-Marie had recognized François' voice; she opened her door. Beside the servant was the fox's jowl of the cousin who had come one day to her father's house.

Brouillard entered and greeted Rose-Marie with a singularly pleasant manner. François went downstairs, after saying to Brouillard,—

"This is mademoiselle, the niece, you know the way downstairs now."

"Good evening, my charming cousin," said M. Brouillard, "you did not expect to see me here this evening?"

"No, indeed, cousin, you have come then to my uncle's house; they have told you that I was here. You were very good to take the trouble to come up to see me."

"The trouble, oh, I came gladly, my dear little cousin, I tell you that I came to look for you, they are asking for you, they want you downstairs in the drawing-room; you must come down there with me."

"What, cousin, I must go downstairs when M. Saint-Godibert has so much company this evening? Oh, that is not possible. Madame told me over and over again, on the contrary, that I should remain in my room this evening. As to that, I should very much prefer to do so."

"Madame! Whom do you mean by madame?"

"Madame Saint-Godibert."

"Why don't you say aunt?"

"Because she prefers that I should say madame."

"Truly, it is enough to make anyone laugh. My little cousin, you must, however, come down with me."

"I should not dare to go where there are so many fine people; besides — since they have forbidden me to do so."

"But do I not tell you that they have sent me to look for you!"

"What! Madame Saint-Godibert!"

"Yes, the Saint-Godiberts wish that you should

go down ; and, besides that, your aunt is downstairs, Mondigo's wife, who ardently desires to see you and who would be delighted to hear you call her aunt. Come along, then, my dear little cousin."

"If my relations order it, I must obey them, but this toilet?"

"You will do very well as you are, besides they are forewarned."

While M. Brouillard was upstairs a kind of agitation pervaded the company ; the ladies talked among themselves and prepared to criticise and turn into ridicule the little country girl who had been so impertinently represented to them as a beauty. The men, on the contrary, looked smilingly at each other, and promised themselves great pleasure in seeing the young girl who had been so highly praised. Madame Mondigo pouted, rolled her eyes, and had a great desire to go before the arrival of her niece, but she feared that that would be remarked ; besides she flattered herself, also, that the little country girl could not surpass her in beauty. M. Saint-Godibert came and went, not knowing what to say and asking himself how he should take the thing. Then his wife said to him from time to time,—

"Don't be uneasy, monsieur, she won't come down, she will remember that I told her she must stay in her room, and she will not dare to come down."

However, the drawing-room door opened, and all looks turned that way when M. Brouillard entered, holding Rose-Marie by the hand, and said,—

"Here is my young cousin, whom I have the honor to present to you."

Then it was necessary that this young girl should sustain the rolling volley of looks directed on her by eyes which seemed to scrutinize one by one her features, and to make the most scrupulous examination of her person, her carriage, her height, and some of which appeared as though their owners were desirous of piercing even beneath the modest kerchief which covered and partially concealed her girlish figure.

But the timidity, the feeling, which Rose-Marie experienced at this moment, had covered her cheeks with a vivid carnation, and when she came into this brilliant drawing-room, with her simple toilet and her little cap on the top of her head, her face was so pretty, her eyes so sweet, her bearing so modest, in fact her whole person so virginal, that the examination was wholly to her advantage.

The men allowed a murmur of admiration to escape them; the women even were disarmed and forced to confess that the young girl was charming. Her two aunts, however, were of a very different opinion.

"Ravishing, a little pearl, an angel," cried

M. Cendrillon, "Why, hang it, Cousin Brouillard was not humbugging us, and he did extremely well to go in search of the young niece."

"She excels all that you said to me," said Dernesty to Frederic. The latter hastened to go up to his cousin; but M. Brouillard had already led Rose up to Madame Mondigo, saying to her,—

"Little cousin, here is your other aunt who is delighted to make your acquaintance."

Rose-Marie made a deep curtsey to Clémence, and the latter hastened to turn her back on her.

But suddenly, M. Roquet, who was looking at Rose-Marie like some one who is seeking to recall a fact to his recollection, darted towards her and exclaimed,—

"Ah, now I know where I have seen you, mademoiselle, how delighted I am — oh, certainly I know where I have seen you."

"But we don't know what you are talking about at all," said the laughing Francine to M. Roquet, "can't you enlighten us a little as to the meaning of your exclamations?"

"Why, fair lady, in looking at, in admiring, mademoiselle, immediately it seemed to me that it was not the first time I had had the pleasure of seeing her, and I remembered all at once that it was in the forest of Fontainebleau, the day we made a charming party, you remember, with donkeys."

"Yes, monsieur, you were there, I remember."

"Why, yes, I lost you in the forest, your mounts took the bits between their teeth and in looking for you I lost myself. I could not find my way, and I had even met with a very disagreeable accident when I encountered mademoiselle. It was really you, was it not, mademoiselle?"

Rose-Marie raised her eyes with a charming smile, and answered,—

"Yes, monsieur, it was me, in fact, and I remember showing you your way."

"You remember it, ah, mademoiselle, I am very much flattered; but for this disagreeable accident which embarrassed me so much, certainly I should then have sought to — but I was horribly inconvenienced."

"What do you mean?" cried M. Cendrillon, drawing near to M. Roquet, "what was this accident that you don't tell us, and which inconvenienced you so much? I am very curious to hear."

M. Roquet compressed his lips, and forcing himself to look mischievous, answered,—

"Oh, I can't tell you, upon my word of honor I cannot; it would be too difficult to relate before ladies, ask mademoiselle, rather."

"What," said M. Brouillard, "my pretty cousin knows, and you cannot tell us, that seems rather strange. Then my little cousin will tell us, I wager."

"I don't know what this gentleman means," answered the young girl, looking surprised.

Roquet, who was then near Frederic, whispered in his ear,—

"It was a matter of breeches, mine split completely, but it was not your cousin's fault. God forgive me for accusing her of it!"

Frederic laughed in M. Roquet's face and went and conducted his cousin to a seat, then he seated himself beside her and tried to make her talk, to diminish the embarrassment she felt in finding herself for the first time in such a numerous circle. On seeing all the looks which were directed upon her, the young girl, who was red and confused, said to Frederic,—

"I was wrong in coming here, was I not cousin?"

"No, indeed, on the contrary you did very well to come; for the matter of that I can attest to you that it was I, who, distressed at never seeing you when I came here, conducted this whole affair."

"O cousin, Madame Saint-Godibert looks at me in such a way that I know she is angry, I shall be scolded."

"But she can't keep you by yourself any longer, for now they have seen you they will often inquire for you. You were not made to pass your life shut up in a room without seeing anybody. If they had continued to do so, I should have had to go to your father. I am sure that they make you unhappy; if that is so, tell me, hide nothing from me, I am your cousin and I ought to protect you."

Rose-Marie glanced sweetly at Frederic, and pressed his hand tenderly, saying to him,—

"Oh, how good you are; thank you, you would like me to really be your sister, would you not?"

Frederic was about to answer when Madame Marmodin approached him saying, half laughing, half piqued,—

"You were to sing a duet with me this evening, the piano has been waiting for a long time, have you not a moment to sacrifice to me, monsieur?"

Frederic rose immediately, and taking Francine's hand went with her to the piano. Dernesty hastened to come and take the place which Frederic had vacated beside Rose-Marie, and addressed to the young girl a great many of those compliments, those gallant remarks, which a young man who goes into society has always at his command.

But the beautiful Clémence passed near them and pinched him on the arm, but for which he would not have observed her, and whispered to him,—

"Will you not soon have done?—you will come beside me or I will never speak to you again."

Dernesty left Rose-Marie, casting on her a very tender look, but hardly had he departed when Julien came to take his place. The son of the house, however, had not time to say four words

to his pretty cousin, when M. Saint-Godlbert came and said to him,—

"Mademoiselle Soufflat is alone, go and keep her company, monsieur, that will be much better."

Julien rose, looking very ill-tempered. M. Cendrillon was advancing to talk with Rose-Marie, but Madame Saint-Godlbert hastened to call the capitalist to make up a card table. In fact, as soon as anyone approached the young girl the master and mistress of the house would immediately seek to occupy them elsewhere, but M. Roquet took his turn to seat himself beside Rose, and when Madame Saint-Godlbert went to ask him to take a hand at cards, he replied,—

"Infinitely obliged, fair lady, but I prefer to keep company with your charming niece."

"As you please, monsieur," said the fat Angélique, in a tone of vexation.

But M. Roquet paid little attention to her, he was entirely subjugated by Rose-Marie's charms. Jerome's daughter was not at all amused at her uncle's grand party, and she hardly listened to what M. Roquet said to her. The latter obstinately remained beside her, and it was not until after a long time that the gallant Roquet decided to take a turn in the drawing-room. Madame Saint-Godlbert, seeing her niece in a corner, approached her and said, in a very dry tone,—

"I hope, mademoiselle, that you will now go up to your room."

Rose-Marie did not make her aunt repeat these words, she slipped quietly out of the drawing-room, and went up to her room, saying to herself,—

"I can amuse myself much better when I am alone, for then I can think of him."

CHAPTER XV

The Proposal of Marriage

Upon the day after the memorable party at which Rose-Marie had made her first appearance and created such a sensation in a Parisian drawing-room, Madame Saint-Godibert and her husband had not recovered from the effects of the anger and mortification which they had experienced at having been forced to present their little country niece in her simple attire to the fashionable company they had gathered about them. As to Madame Mondigo, she had laid aside her usual becoming languor to declare emphatically, in talking the matter over with her sister-in-law, that she would not again put her foot in the house as long as the young girl should be there.

In yielding to the first impulses of her rage, Angélique cried spitefully,—

"We must send this little girl back to her father at once, and forbid her to come here again."

"Yes," said Saint-Godibert, "yes, send her back to Avon, if you like"; but, after momentary consideration, the banker scratched his ear thoughtfully and looked at his wife, as he resumed, "We should not do well to send her away now, we

cannot prevent their having seen her, and if they don't see her again all these people who are so enthusiastic over her will be asking us every day what has become of her, and Cousin Brouillard, who is as wicked as a red donkey, will not fail to say everywhere that we have sent our niece away from our house, that we have refused to take charge of her, and people will cast all manner of stones at us."

"That's true," said Angélique, "I see that we shall be obliged to keep her, but we must avail ourselves of the first occasion which presents itself of establishing her."

"That's my opinion exactly."

"And we shall not care what this sly little thing thinks of it."

"It would be superfluous to do so, because, with her lowered eyes and her Sainte-Nitouche look, Fifine declares that she is no better than others, that she has intrigues, and that she knows some young men in Paris."

"Really, if I had proof of it, then I would publicly send her away from my house."

"We have nothing except suspicions as yet; but Fifine is clever, if there is anything in it she will find it out."

The presence of a pretty woman is always the best means of attracting people to a house. Rose-Marie's presentation at her uncle's party had already made some noise in society, everybody was

talking of the little country girl; the men eulogizing her and the women criticising. Those who had not seen her desired to know her, and those who had seen her at the party wished to see her again; so visitors were frequent at Madame Saint-Godibert's, to whom they spoke incessantly of her niece, which continually gave her the megrims and put her in a frightful temper. But among those who showed the most impressiveness in coming to see Rose, no one could be compared to M. Roquet; it was rarely that a day passed without his coming to visit Madame Saint-Godibert, and as they did not now close the door of the little room in which the young girl was working, M. Roquet did not fail to go in there also, to present his compliments; then he returned in the evening to try and see her again, and when the little niece was not present he hardly spoke, and heaved sighs which gave Madame Saint-Godibert the desire to stifle him. Rose-Marie was very little touched by the compliments, the sweet looks and the gallantry with which M. Roquet overwhelmed her. She thought of the young painter and regretted the time when they had left her alone, when they had not allowed anybody to approach her, because then she had been freer to think of him; but now Madame Saint-Godibert, who thought, without doubt, that her niece would not make a long stay with her, was careful to profit by her presence and not to leave her a

moment for rest. When by chance there was no needlework she sent the young girl to arrange, to clean, in all the rooms of the house. They made of her almost a household servant. At last, during Julien's absence, they sent her with Fifine to his room, to put the linen of the young man in order, and Mademoiselle Fifine was careful to leave everything to Rose-Marie to do; but no matter what they did to aggravate her, the latter never complained and did without murmuring all that they told her.

As to François, he was furious because they employed Rose-Marie in doing such work, and he did not refrain from saying often,—

"Good God! they are making a servant of their niece, they have made her a page, a housemaid, if we wait long enough we shall see her blacking the shoes and washing the dishes; she ought to feel very happy here."

Rose-Marie's only desire was again to take a little walk with Papa Savenay, but whether he had not the time, or whether he feared to disturb her, for some days she had not seen him.

One morning she opened her door on to the landing and was going towards the staircase, she desired to go as far as the office to say good morning to her old friend; but hardly had she left her room when Mademoiselle Fifine opened her door as though to watch her. Then Rose-Marie dared not go down, and sadly returned to her room.

At last, one morning, very early, somebody knocked at Rose-Marie's door; she recognized the voice of the old man, who was humming one of his favorite songs, and hastened to open the door to him.

"Oh, what a long time since you came to see me!" cried Rose-Marie, after she had greeted her old friend.

"That's true, my child, but it was not my fault. M. Saint-Godibert scolded his other clerks because they came too late to the office, and then I dared not go to walk any more. Today I came earlier than usual, because I absolutely felt that I must see you, for I have many things to say to you."

"To say to me, my good friend?"

"Yes, indeed, I also have had a meeting with someone with whom you are acquainted; you know whom I mean — that young man — the other day."

Rose-Marie reddened and turned pale almost in the same moment; her heart swelled, she rose hastily, she was so much moved that she could hardly utter the words,—

"What do you mean, my friend? — Was it M. Leopold whom you saw?"

"Of course."

"And he spoke to you?"

"Certainly."

"But how did that come about? — Did he

recognize you then? — by what chance? — oh tell me all about it, I beg of you!"

"Why, good heavens, I should have told you all about it by this time if you had been willing to let me speak."

"I'll hold my tongue, my friend; I'll be silent, but speak at once."

"Well, then, it seems that the other morning, after meeting you near the Champs Élysées, this young man had not so entirely departed as you thought then — lovers often act in that manner — he appeared to go, but he did not wish to do so; in short, the young painter probably followed us from afar and he saw us come together into this house. Since that time, desiring no doubt to see you again, M. Leopold often plants himself in the street for whole hours, and before this house. I have more than once seen him, I have often thought that he noticed me, but I said nothing; I waited, I divined what he wished to come at. Ha, ha! I have been young myself.

Tho' 'tis not given to man to pluck again
The flow'rs, too numerous, that in youth unfold;
Who doth his life in kindly deeds employ,
Why, such a one, dear friends, will ne'er grow old."

"Oh, my dear, good friend, please?"

"Pardon, I will continue. At length, yesterday, as I was going to dinner, M. Leopold accosted me very politely, and said to me, 'Monsieur, I don't think I am mistaken in saying that I have

had the honor of meeting you when you were giving your arm to a young person whom I know, a Mademoiselle Rose-Marie, from the village of Avon.' I answered that he was not mistaken. Then this poor young man, who was trembling with emotion, entreated me to hear him. I begged him to be calm and told him that I was ready to listen. I was perhaps in the wrong to tell him that my child."

"Oh, no, no! you did well, my good friend, but after that—"

"He told me that an accident had prevented his returning to Fontainebleau at the time that he had promised you—"

"Then it was not his fault, I was sure of that."

"That, at length, when he went to the village of Avon, your servant informed him that you had started for Paris and that you intended to remain there; then he took himself off, feeling very much mortified, and without seeing your father."

"Poor fellow, and then?"

"He hoped to find you in Paris, but he also looked for Gogos, without suspecting that he should find none of them. Finally, and this is most shocking, some young men went to his study and discovered your portrait, which he had hidden; then one of them said that he knew you. It seems it was that same young man who followed you about on the first day of your arrival, and this scoundrel took it upon himself to slander you, to

say about you things which would render you an object of scorn to virtuous people."

"O my God! My God!"

"Reassure yourself, my child, it was not difficult for me to prove that it was a cowardly slander. That poor young man, if you had seen his joy, his ecstasy, he jumped in the street, he threw himself on my neck, he thanked me a thousand times for having protected you; then he ran off like a madman, shouting to me that he was going to kill the one who had spoken ill of you."

"Why, he is going to fight,—if anything should happen to him! We must stop him!"

"I called him loudly, but he did not listen to me. I was very uneasy as to the outcome of this affair when, this morning, I saw M. Leopold again."

"He was not wounded?"

"He could not find this wicked rascal, whose name it appears is Richard, and who has moved without leaving his address."

"Oh, I am glad of that."

"Then this young painter entreated me to bring to you a little note in which he asked your pardon for having for an instant believed you guilty. I should, no doubt, have refused to carry this message, I am rather old to be a messenger in a love affair, but he was so urgent and the note was left open, so, in fact, I—"

"You've brought it, oh, thank you, thank you,

my good friend; this poor young man, you would have pained him if you had refused him. Oh, give it to me, I am going to read it aloud, for you are our confidant, we have no secrets from you."

And Rose-Marie with a trembling hand took the letter which Papa Savenay handed her, and read in an agitated voice,—

MADEMOISELLE: The estimable person who brings you this letter will inform you how deeply I repent having passed you by without speaking to you the other morning. If you knew how much I have suffered, I, who have not ceased for a moment to think of you. Oh, forgive me, and allow me to tell you that I shall never love any other than you. Your forgiveness will endue me with new life and happiness.

Rose-Marie fell on the old man's neck, exclaiming,—

"He will love no one but me — O my dear friend, how happy I am. You will tell him that I forgive him, that I also — oh, I don't know how to say that. Must I write to him also?"

"No, no, that would not be proper, a verbal answer is enough. I told him, too, that I would not take charge of another message, once is sufficient; but be easy, he knows what you wish him to know; he will be happy, very happy; and later we shall see what will happen. But, good heavens! I am forgetting the office, and the time is passing. Good-by, my child, good-by."

"You will come and see me again soon, will you not, my good friend?"

"At the first opportunity that I have."

"And you will bring me some news of him?"

"Yes, yes."

"And you will tell him that we'll go for a walk one of these mornings?"

"Yes, yes."

Papa Savenay listened no further to her, but hastened to go down the stairs, without noticing that Mademoiselle Fifine appeared at the entrance to her chamber, taking note of all that passed.

Rose-Marie was alone in her room, but from that instant everything was beatified in her eyes; for as soon as she learned that she was loved by the object of her own affection, and that the feeling which was a part of her very life was shared by him, there was for her no more loneliness, sorrow or vexation. The happiness which overflows one's heart sheds itself on everything that surrounds one; the most gloomy retreat appears cheerful and commodious; the people whom one loves least appear pleasing to one; one sees everything at its best, rose-colored. This is one of the thousand metamorphoses produced by love. The young girl, then, went down to her aunt in a livelier, more cheerful frame of mind, she greeted her with a charming smile; she set herself to work with unequalled ardor, and she sewed still better than usual. But, on this same day, at four o'clock in the afternoon, M. Roquet, dressed entirely in black and with peculiar care, and having on new

spectacles, presented himself at the banker's house and said to Mademoiselle Fifine that he desired to speak to Monsieur and Madame Saint-Godibert at the same time.

"Very well, sir," answered the maid-servant. "Monsieur has just come upstairs from his office and is in the drawing-room with madame."

"Go and inform them that I am here," said M. Roquet, in an important tone, which made Mademoiselle Fifine laugh.

The Saint-Godibert couple told the maid to admit M. Roquet, and the latter presented himself before them with an air of gravity which seemed to betoken that his visit had a very important object.

"Good day, my dear M. Roquet, you wished to speak to my wife and myself. We are always charmed to see you — but have you something particular to say to us today?"

M. Roquet, who had prepared his speech, cleared his throat and began.

"Monsieur and madame, I will come to my object with the frankness of a man who is entirely frank. I am a bachelor, in other words, living in a state of celibacy; I have seven thousand francs income, clear and clean, and a large amount of personal property; I have an infinite quantity of linen. Up to the present I have never dreamed of marrying, although certainly had I wished to do so,— you can understand that had I desired

to do so, I should not have lacked opportunities, because a man who has seven thousand francs income, and is not entirely disagreeable in his personal appearance — I don't say that, however, to praise myself — but, in fact, as everybody knows, and it is not forbidden — I am sure that you will be of my opinion — "

"I am of your opinion," answered M. Saint-Godibert, who did not yet know what M. Roquet was trying to get at. As to Angélique, she said, impatiently,—

"But come, why don't you tell us what you wish to say, M. Roquet?"

"I am coming to it, my dear lady. I am, then, a very presentable match as to fortune, physique, and age; I am not in my first youth, I will concede, but, in fact, of an agreeable age. Well, then, I came today to put everything that I possess at the feet of your pretty niece and to ask of you the hand of Mademoiselle Rose-Marie."

The two married people seemed struck with astonishment, they looked at him, then M. Saint-Godibert said,—

"The little one's hand?—what, M. Roquet, you are speaking seriously, you are not joking, when you tell us that you wish to marry Rose-Marie?"

"I am entirely serious in my wish to do so, I may even say that I passionately desire it."

"But have you reflected well," said Angélique, "have you weighed the consequences of this step?"

"It appears to me that the consequences will be marriage, if you consent to it. I do not hide from you that I am in love with Mademoiselle Rose-Marie, that I love her to distraction. I have been in love very often in the course of my gallant career. Ha, ha! but never in this fashion. I dare to affirm that my former affairs bore no resemblance to the feeling I now experience."

M. Saint-Godibert consulted his wife with a look, and said hesitatingly,—

"My dear Monsieur Roquet, your offer is most assuredly not to be disdained, but you perhaps thought that this young girl, who happens to be our niece, by chance — that is to say — in fact, I ought to warn you that she has no fortune. And as for me, as her uncle, I can absolutely do nothing for her, seeing that we have a son; is it not so, Angélique?"

"Yes, we have a son undoubtedly, and, besides, we are still too young to despoil ourselves for others."

"I ask nothing," cried Roquet, drawing himself up, and readjusting his spectacles. "That the charming Rose-Marie shall become my wife is all that I desire; in fact, with seven thousand francs of income, when one is no longer a child, it seems to me that one might get along."

"Certainly, can even get along very well," answered Saint-Godibert, whose physiognomy began to clear, "but, my good Roquet, I must — it's

necessary that you should know that Rose-Marie's father, who is a distant connection of my own, my brother, in fact, is not dead —"

"And that he is a farmer at the village of Avon."

"What, how did you know that?" said the married couple, reddening.

"I learned it in a very simple manner, Mademoiselle Rose herself told me so when I met her in the forest of Fontainebleau, oh, I have not forgotten a single word that she said, she had already smitten me to the heart."

"Then, if you know that, you have nothing further to learn, only it is necessary to tell you that her father still calls himself Gogo; it is a name that he has thought fit to retain, while I and my brother Mondigo have taken others, and you can imagine that we do not wish to be called otherwise, in fact, that we will not."

M. Roquet took the banker's hand and shook it warmly, exclaiming,—

"My dear Monsieur Saint-Godibert, I shall be very much flattered at my wife's uncles having names so distinguished as yours; only let me marry your pretty niece, and I shall always make it a pleasure and a duty to conform to you in all things."

"Then I do not see the slightest obstacle to it," said M. Saint-Godibert, shaking him by the hand.

"That is to say," said Angélique, "that you may hereafter look upon it as a settled thing."

"Oh, my dear Madame Saint-Godibert, how delighted I am!" and in his joy M. Roquet fell on his future uncle-in-law's neck; then he went to madame and in his excitement kissed her on the nose, which did not prevent him from jumping around the room, repeating,—

"By Jove, how delighted I am!"

"And it seems to me that Mademoiselle Rose-Marie will have reason to be so, too," said Angélique, wiping her nose, on which he had left traces of his joy. "To find so good a match as you, in truth, that little girl was born under a fortunate star; this is more than she could have hoped for."

"My faith, I am beginning to think her father did well in sending her to Paris," said Saint-Godibert.

"Oh, as to her father, I presume that we shall have need of his consent also, do you think that I should go to see him?"

"It's unnecessary, I will write to him, that he may send it to us. Hang it! he will have no chance to refuse it, I shall tell him what a fine match you are; he will be delighted, poor man, overwhelmed with admiration."

"Come, you crown all my hopes; as to Mademoiselle Rose-Marie, do you think that, for her part, she will be favorable to me? I should very much like to see her."

"Refuse to accept you," said Angelique, "she would be out of her mind to do so, a husband like you, with a fortune; a distinguished man with a superb physique."

"Oh, Madame Saint-Godibert!"

"I repeat to you that she will be delighted; as to that, I don't know whether she had a presentiment of her happiness, but today she has been extremely cheerful, ah, you must have said something to her, you seductive man."

"No, I give you my word of honor, I said nothing to her by word of mouth; but with my eyes, oh, yes, I have said a good deal with my eyes."

"In fact, from this moment, M. Roquet, you have acquired the right to pay your court to her."

"I shall use it, my dear lady."

"Will you not dine with us to celebrate this day? We shall have M. Cendrillon, M. Dernesty, and the major."

"I cannot, I have an engagement, but I shall try to be at liberty this evening, but not too late; say nothing to your niece up to that time. I shall be pleased to be the first to declare my intentions to her; I wish to enjoy her confusion. It gives me a good deal of pleasure to see a woman's timidity."

"As you will, my dear friend. Until this evening, then."

"Until this evening, then, my future relations,

Monsieur and Madame de Saint-Godibert, I present to you my respectful homage."

Roquet departed transported with joy.

"He is charming," said Angélique, who noticed that their future nephew had accorded them the noble prefix of de; "and it must be confessed that this little girl is more fortunate than she deserves."

"In fact," said Saint-Godibert, "from the moment that this engagement with M. Roquet is an assured thing, I shall be easy about her; my niece will be most excellently established, it will have cost me nothing, but we shall always have the credit of it. By the way, we have company today, Rose-Marie shall dine with us."

"Oh, since she is to be Madame Roquet, I see nothing against it."

Rose-Marie was very much surprised when her aunt returned to her wearing an almost amiable smile, and spoke to her in a tone much gentler than usual; then, at length, and wishing to show her something, in place of saying to her dryly, "Mademoiselle," the superb Angélique said to her, "My niece," something which had not happened before.

The young girl received these marks of good will with gratitude, but her astonishment was still further augmented when her aunt said to her,—

"We have some people to dinner today, Rose, but you shall dine with us; go and make your-

self look as nice as you can, and come down again afterwards."

Rose-Marie obeyed her aunt, inquiring within herself as to the cause of the change in the latter's manners and her attentions; but, as her heart was good and sensible, the young girl thought that her relatives had recovered from the prejudice with which she had inspired them, and said,—

"M. Frederic was right in thinking that they would end by loving me."

Rose-Marie came downstairs again, looking fresh, pretty, and still more charming than in her simple costume. The joy which she had felt that morning had shed a new light on her features, for nothing embellishes one like happiness. On seeing his niece, M. Saint-Godibert gave her a little tap on the chin, and said to her,—

"Come, decidedly we are very pleasing, and I can understand very well how — yes, yes, I can understand it."

Rose-Marie could not comprehend what her uncle was saying, but she gave him a charming smile to prove that she was sensible of the marks of friendship which he deigned to give her.

M. Cendrillon and Major Krouteberg were prompt at the hour for dinner. Julien soon arrived, and was very much surprised on perceiving his gentle cousin. He told her how pleased he was that they had not sent her back to her room, and Rose-Marie said to him,—

"Oh, now your parents are very good to me, and I am very much pleased because I believe that they love me a little."

"Oh, we are going to dine with the pretty little niece," cried M. Cendrillon, going to tap Rose-Marie's arm. "So much the better, I love pretty women. Confound it, if I had time I would have a seraglio full of them; but I haven't the time."

Major Krouteberg made a low bow to Rose-Marie and opened his mouth to say something pleasant to her, but perceiving Angélique, who was looking at him, he went to her with his mouth still open and paid to her the compliment that he was about to make to her niece.

They were only awaiting Dernesty, who for some time past had come very rarely to the Saint-Godiberts. Madame, who made much fuss about him because he gave himself the airs of a great nobleman, had said to her husband, that they must send him an invitation, and they expected him, since he had not refused it. The young dandy arrived at length. He excused himself for having made them wait, under the pretext of a multiplicity of affairs; he addressed some agreeable compliments to the mistress of the house and cast admiring glances on her pretty niece.

"We don't see anything of you now, M. Dernesty," said Angélique, "you neglect us cruelly, it is very wrong of you."

"It is not my fault, my dear lady, but I am so overwhelmed with business for some time past that I have not a minute to give to my pleasures."

"What business is this gentleman engaged in?" said M. Cendrillon, in a low tone, to his friend, Saint-Godibert.

"Why, I think he speculates in stocks, he frequents the exchange, he is doing very well."

The capitalist made a motion of the head which indicated doubt, as he answered,—

"I have never seen him at the exchange. What was it now that some one said to me about him, hum— well, they might be mistaken."

"What was it they told you about him?"

"I don't like to repeat things which might injure people, above all when I am not sure of my facts. Does this fine gentleman owe you any money?"

"No."

"Then take what I have said as nothing."

The announcement of dinner interrupted this conversation; Major Krouteberg, always Madame Saint-Godibert's faithful chevalier, hastened to offer her his arm. Julien and Dernesty were about to escort Rose-Marie, but M. Cendrillon forestalled them, exclaiming,—

"Ha, ha! gentlemen, I was quicker than you; I thought, however, that you were going to rob me of this treasure."

The two young men remained as if stunned,

but Dernesty very quickly recovered himself and squeezed the elbow of the son of the house as he whispered in his ear,—

"You are a milksop."

Then he darted into the dining-room, exclaiming,—

"I declare I am as hungry as a hunter."

Rose-Marie was at first intimidated at finding herself at table with so many people whom she did not know, but M. Cendrillon was very pleasant to her, and his gayety and candor animated the repast.

M. Dernesty also wished to be amiable, but his wit was satirical without being gay. Julien took a good deal of notice of his cousin and did not understand the change which had taken place in the manner of his parents towards the young girl. Major Krouteberg hardly spoke, but he ate for four, approving what was said by a pantomime which did not impede his masticatory functions.

While simpering with M. Dernesty, Madame Saint-Godibert asked him for some news of his friend, M. Richard, whom they had not seen for a long time.

"I don't know what's become of him, madame." answered Dernesty, "I believe that he's moved, but I never meet him anywhere."

At the name of Richard, Rose-Marie listened, for she remembered that that was the name of the man whose conduct had been so infamous towards

her; but as no one spoke further of this gentleman she presumed that he had nothing to do with the one with whom Leopold had wished to fight. She could not believe that that man could ever have been admitted into the society which came to her uncle's house. The young girl did not yet know the world, she was not aware that scoundrels can easily slip into honest people's houses.

As they left the table, M. Cendrillon, delighted with Rose-Marie's refined manners and modesty, struck M. Saint-Godibert on the chest, saying to him,—

"By Jove, my dear friend, you have an extremely pretty little niece, you must marry her very well."

"I am already thinking of it," answered the banker, rubbing his hands.

"By the way," resumed the capitalist, "my old friend, Papa Savenay, you have given him a place in your office, I believe?"

"Certainly, I have taken him into my employ."

"I am delighted, if I had thought of it a little sooner, I should have been very much pleased to have said a few friendly words to the honest man."

M. Saint-Godibert, who was feeling very good-humored and complacent, answered,—

"You may still see him if it is agreeable to you; there was some pressing business at the office this evening, and my clerks came back to work. I will send to know if old Savenay is still there,

and then they can tell him to come up for a few moments."

"By Jove, I shall be much pleased!"

During this conversation the two young men had approached Rose-Marie and were addressing to her some compliments which she received without exhibiting any pleasure; it even seemed as though she experienced a painful feeling in being obliged to listen to them. Her eyes wandered about the drawing-room as if in search of some one who would come to her rescue, but Madame Saint-Godibert was listening to the major, who was praising the cut of her gown, and did not notice her niece at all. However, M. Saint-Godibert having left the room, M. Cendrillon turned towards the young men, saying to them,—

"Come, gentlemen, let's have a game of écarté; I don't know it very well, I have fifteen napoleons to lose, who will be my man?"

"I'll play with you," said Dernesty.

"And I'll bet for you," said Julien.

The three men went towards a card table. M. Cendrillon and Dernesty began to play, and Julien, who was betting for his friend, was seated beside the latter. M. Cendrillon had already lost three napoleons when M. Saint-Godibert came into the drawing-room with Papa Savenay. The two young men were startled, the big capitalist cried,—

"Why, here's my old friend; come! how are

you, old papa? Is that health still good?—You look as if it were superb."

The old man came in, bowing to all the company, he started with surprise and joy on seeing Rose-Marie, who smiled sweetly at him.

"Ha! ha! my old fellow," resumed M. Cendrillon, "it seems that you know my friend's pretty little niece."

"I have that honor, M. Cendrillon; she is a charming person and I am doubly happy on seeing her here."

"Hang it, she is in good hands here, her uncle is going to marry her, to establish her."

"That is my intention," answered the banker, with an important air,"

"Oh, monsieur, I thank you for all that you are doing for this dear child," resumed the old man, "she deserves it, and it gives me a great deal of pleasure."

"And since when have you known Saint-Godibert's niece?" asked M. Cendrillon.

Papa Savenay remembered that he must not say that she was the young girl who was looking for her uncles Gogo; he hesitated for a moment, and said at length, approaching the card table with a mysterious air,—

"If you could know, that poor little thing, in what a position she found herself because of me; it was not my fault, however, but it might have proved fatal to her."

"How's that, Papa Savenay, tell us how that happened."

The old man leaned on the table, and said in a low voice,—

"She has never spoken of it to anybody, her father feared that it might prove dangerous to her if it were known; but here, between ourselves, I may as well tell you."

The two young men were very uneasy, and, without knowing what the old man was going to say, they trembled, despite themselves.

M. Cendrillon resumed,—

"Come, make an end of it, Papa Savenay; if there is a secret we shall know how to keep it."

"Well, then, when I was attacked, robbed in the forest of Fontainebleau, Mademoiselle Rose-Marie was there by chance; she was passing, she had been frightened, she was hidden, happily, but she saw my two robbers."

"She saw them?" cried Dernesty, as if yielding to an involuntary movement.

Papa Savenay paused instead of answering, it seemed that this voice which he heard had a singular effect upon him, but he continued,—

"Yes, she saw them, but it was as if she had not seen them. It seems that their faces were smeared with black, and their caps hid their eyes; for the rest she tells me that she thinks that they were not ordinary robbers, but gentlemen in disguise. They were well shod and wore gloves."

"What a pity that she did not see their faces!" exclaimed Saint-Godibert, "she would perhaps have one day recognized the robbers."

M. Cendrillon said nothing, he was looking at young Julien, whose face had become livid.

"Don't speak of that, gentlemen," Papa Savenay went on, "Mademoiselle Rose-Marie will scold me if she knows I have related this adventure; but here is some company who have just come in. Good evening, Monsieur Cendrillon; gentlemen, I have the honor to wish you good evening. Mademoiselle Rose-Marie is talking with her aunt, and I do not wish to disturb her," and old Savenay left the drawing-room.

Several people had already arrived, and M. Saint-Godibert went to do the honors of the house.

"Well, we are not playing," resumed Dernesty, when the old man had left.

"Why, it seems that your friend has abandoned you," said M. Cendrillon watching Julien, who was leaving the drawing-room.

"Oh, yes, he had to go, I believe he has an engagement for this evening, but I can play alone very well."

M. Cendrillon resumed his play and said nothing more; he seemed in haste, however, to finish the game, and as soon as he had lost his money he rose and went to seat himself in a corner of the drawing-room. As for Dernesty he walked about

the rooms, but he did not again approach Rose-Marie. He was about to leave, when Frederic arrived; he stopped Dernesty, saying to him,—

"What are you running away so early for?"

"I am sorry, my dear friend, I have an appointment for this evening which I must not fail to keep, but I do not wish any one to see me go."

"Oh, very well, you are entirely at liberty. But is it true, as they tell me, that my little cousin is here?"

"Yes, yes, there she is sitting over there."

And Dernesty left, while Frederic went to seat himself by the side of Rose-Marie. The latter apprised him of the happy change in her relatives' manner toward herself, of the friendship, the benevolence with which they treated her now.

"Did I not tell you that they would end by loving you?" said Frederic. "How could they do otherwise, you are so pleasing, so amiable, so —listen, cousin, I love you myself like a madman."

"And I love you like a sister," said Rose, holding out her hand to Frederic, who answered,—

"Come, I see that we must remain as we are, I should have liked it otherwise, however, since I can only have your friendship I must content myself with that. Oh, by Jove, here is my aunt calling me; what the devil! since I can be nothing but a brother to you they might as well allow me to talk with you."

Angélique had wished to separate her nephew and Rose-Marie because M. Roquet had just arrived, handsomely got up, perfumed.

After some words spoken by Madame Saint-Godibert and her husband he went to seat himself by Rose-Marie, who was then alone. Adjusting his spectacles firmly on his nose, he said to the young girl,—

"Mademoiselle, I have something very interesting to tell you."

"To tell me, monsieur?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, I should like to believe that you will share the joy with which it inspires me."

"If it is something agreeable to you, it will give me pleasure also, monsieur."

"It is very good of you to say so. Oh, how tiresome it is, I have some new spectacles, and they won't keep on, they are always slipping down. Charming Rose-Marie, perhaps you will have already divined what I am going to say to you. You have read in my eyes—there my spectacles are on the ground—"

The young girl picked up M. Roquet's spectacles, and presented them to him, saying,—

"I have read nothing at all, M. Roquet, and I cannot divine."

"Ah, I have thought, that is, to myself, since that day when I met you in the forest of Fontainebleau, I have not forgotten you for a moment,

you made such an impression upon me, and if my breeches had not been torn, certainly our acquaintance would have progressed better, but when one is embarrassed in walking, one can hardly run after a pretty woman."

"Monsieur, what has that to do with the news that you are going to tell me?"

"Oh, forgive me, I am going a long way about to say it. Yes, beautiful Rose-Marie, my love made a loop so that it should not declare itself too suddenly."

"Your love, monsieur?"

"It is virtuous and legitimate,—in a word, I aspire to be your husband. I declared my intentions this morning to monsieur and madame, your uncle and aunt, who have agreed to them, and have authorized me to make them known to you, and told me that they are going to write to your father, and that our marriage is an event which I may consider as settled."

Rose-Marie could not answer, she still listened. She believed that she was dreaming, she was so astonished that she had no strength to speak. M. Roquet, who perceived her emotion, interpreted it favorably, and took her hand, saying,—

"How your emotion touches me, amiable girl, how much the sweet union we are about to form adds to my happiness. How good I shall be to you — on the ground again, certainly I cannot keep this pair."

But while M. Roquet was picking up his glasses, Rose-Marie recovered from her surprise, and said to him in a very polite but resolute tone,—

"Monsieur, I cannot but be honored at the offer which you have made me, the kindness which has led you to notice a poor girl, and I thank you; but I cannot accept, I do not think of marrying."

"You cannot accept," replied M. Roquet, "you are too modest; why, it is an understood thing, arranged with your relatives, that I shall be your husband — I believe that they will stay on now — so much the more that my fortune is considerable, and I take you without a dowry — I have put the hooks behind my ears — I shall take you —"

"Monsieur, I repeat to you that I thank you, and consider myself very much honored, but I will not be your wife."

M. Roquet began to see that the young girl was not so much delighted as he had at first believed. After vainly trying to vanquish Rose's resistance, the aspirant for her hand arose, and went in search of Angélique, to whom he said, with an air of consternation,—

"Your niece refuses me,— she will not marry me."

"She refuses you? — oh, that is too much," murmured Madame Saint-Godibert, glancing angrily at the young girl.

"I also find it most extraordinary, but she absolutely refuses me."

"Come now, that is impossible. As for that, we have told you that this marriage suits us, and I repeat to you that it will take place. Is there any need of consulting these little girls?"

"What is the matter now?" asked M. Saint-Godibert, drawing near to his wife.

"It is only that this saucy, little baggage of a Rose-Marie has dared to say to M. Roquet that she thanks him, but does not wish to marry him."

M. Saint-Godibert blew his nose resonantly, and cried,—

"What, she says that, when she ought to jump for joy, when she should be mad with pleasure. But don't let that make you uneasy, my dear Roquet, you must remember that we are the masters; tomorrow I shall write to her father, and I promise you that he will consent to it. This marriage is made, understood, and settled; and as to the little one, she says that this evening, but when she has reflected, I wager that she will be entirely obedient, and that she will even see that it is for her happiness."

"You pour balm into my heart, my dear M. Saint-Godibert, I leave myself entirely in your hands."

"Be easy, you shall marry our niece."

The rest of the evening passed, and Roquet did not dare again to speak of his love to Rose-Marie. He contented himself with staying beside her, and looking at her incessantly, when he was not

replacing his spectacles. The young girl had been rendered very sad and alarmed since she had known what they meditated for her. She wished very much to tell Frederic about it, but her aunt seemed to be watching them and prevented him from speaking to her. The time came for the company to leave, the big young man seemed surprised at his cousin's sad looks and wished to ask her the cause of them, but, as people were observing them, he had no means of doing so, and was obliged to leave without knowing anything further. As to M. Roquet, as he was about to say "Good-evening" to Rose-Marie, Angélique said to him,—

"Kiss her hand, M. Roquet, you have a right to do so, it is allowable to kiss the hand of one's future wife."

"What, madame?" murmured Rose-Marie, with an air of consternation.

"Come, monsieur, kiss it quickly."

M. Roquet did so, taking precaution to prevent his glasses from falling off, and departed with a triumphant air. The company had now all gone, and M. Saint-Godibert said to his niece, with an air that was no longer amiable,—

"Mademoiselle, M. Roquet has asked your hand of us, I am going to ask your father's consent, which he will be only too pleased to give; from this day forth you may look upon this gentleman as your future husband."

"But uncle, I don't love M. Roquet at all."

"Hold your tongue," said Angélique, "you are a little fool, but you will marry M. Roquet."

The married couple went into their room, not wishing to listen further to Rose-Marie, and the latter then went up to hers, weeping, and saying,—

"Oh, my God, to marry M. Roquet would be frightful, but happily my old friend will protect me. He will help me, I hope, he will tell this to — all those whom I love, and they will come to my help; oh, I will not be Madame Roquet."

CHAPTER XVI

The Finger of Providence

Rose-Marie's happiness on receiving the note from Leopold, and learning that the young painter still loved her, had been excessive, she had felt that knowing that she could never again feel grief. But we little dream what the future holds for us or what reverses are in store, and the young girl's grief and despair on finding herself threatened with being forced into a marriage with Roquet were greater than any she had experienced before. This sudden transition from pleasure to pain, from hope to despair, had been very painful, and Rose-Marie had scarcely closed her eyes throughout the entire night.

She rose early in the morning, wishing she could talk with her old friend, and earnestly hoping he would come to see her. She half opened her door, she listened, she looked over the bannisters, but Papa Savenay did not appear. Instead of that, Mademoiselle Fifine opened her door almost at the same time as the young girl came on to the landing; she seemed to be spying upon Rose-Marie's actions, and the latter decided to go back into her room without seeing her old friend.

The day passed very sadly for the poor little thing; she saw only her aunt and her uncle, who kept repeating to her,—

"How fortunate you are, a girl who has nothing, to find such a fine match as M. Roquet; it's superb, it's hardly to be believed."

Rose tried to answer, murmuring sadly,—

"But this gentleman does not please me at all, I should prefer to go back to my father's house."

Madame Saint-Godibert made horrible eyes, and rushed at the young girl as if she were going to beat her, crying,—

"Hold your tongue, idiot, you will marry M. Roquet, we are not going to suffer our niece to omit such an opportunity of becoming rich, to fall upon our hands later on, everybody knows that."

"Besides, mademoiselle," said M. Saint-Godibert, in his turn, "Your father will be delighted with this marriage, I shall write to him immediately, and he will certainly order you to obey us."

"My father loves me too much to constrain me to marry anyone against my will."

"That is what we shall see, but, at least, unless Jerome has become absolutely stupid, he will order you to marry M. Roquet."

Rose dared say nothing more, she contented herself with weeping, which seemed to have little effect upon her aunt and uncle. She decided this time to go down to the office that she might tell

her sorrows to Papa Savenay, and she hoped that he would also tell them to M. Leopold and that he would find some means of relieving her; but between seven o'clock and a quarter past, two little raps were heard at her door and at the same time she recognized the voice of the old man who asked if she were up. She ran to open it, and uttered a cry of joy as she threw herself into her protector's arms.

"What is the matter with you, my child? — you seem much troubled, much agitated," said Papa Savenay, entering the room with Rose.

The latter hastened to close the door and returned to press the kind old man's hands in hers, saying,—

"Oh, I am very unhappy, and my only hope is in you, my good friend."

"Unhappy! why — my God! I thought that your relations had at length rendered you justice, that they were treating you with kindness, now."

"Alas, I believed in their kindness also, for a moment, but, oh, if you knew the cause of it; oh, my friend, you will defend me, you will protect me."

"Explain yourself, my child."

"Well, then, my uncle and aunt wish to marry me — to make me marry M. Roquet, a gentleman who is old enough to be my father. They say that he is rich; but oh, I will not have him, for I detest him."

"Isn't that because you love another, my child?"

"Oh, my good friend, I do not know whether that has anything to do with it, but of this I am very certain, that I shall be very unhappy if they force me to marry M. Roquet.— Oh, I beg of you, do not abandon me! They say that they will write to my father, but they will not tell him that I suffer, that this marriage reduces me to despair."

And Rose-Marie sobbed, throwing herself on the old man's breast. The latter tried to console her, to calm her, by saying,—

"Don't give way thus, no one can marry you unless your father wishes it."

"But if they should write to him that it is a fine match for me, that I should be rich, happy, — my God, if he should consent to it!"

"Re-assure yourself; if it be necessary, other persons will go and see your father, and will tell him how matters stand, and how you dislike this M. Roquet."

"Oh, yes, my good friend!"

"I must go down to the office, for I don't wish to be late there; calm yourself, my child, and rely upon me."

"Oh, I place every confidence in you, and then, if, by chance, you should meet M. Leopold, you will tell him all about it, will you not?"

"Yes, yes, and I shall meet him, there is not

the least doubt, for I see him every morning before coming into the house; he is still there in the street. He comes to say good-day to me, and to ask for news of you."

"What, he is there every day, oh, that is nice," and Rose-Marie blushed with pleasure. She had already forgotten all her sorrows on learning that the young painter thought of her without cessation, but soon she resumed,—

"Oh, my friend, M. Leopold comes, I am sure, because he likes so much to see you."

"I believe so," said the old man, smiling; "oh, well, I know that it is to see me that he comes there every day. But now that you are more tranquil I will go down to the office. Come, have courage, and don't cry any more."

Papa Savenay departed. Rose believed that she heard the door of Mademoiselle Fifine's room open quietly, then some one went down the stairs softly, as though they were following the old man, but she paid little attention to this circumstance; she was so pleased at knowing that Leopold had not forgotten her that she could not think of anything else.

Rose-Marie went downstairs to her aunt at the usual hour. She found the robust Angélique with her husband, engaged in a very animated conversation, and Mademoiselle Fifine, who had been with them, went away, looking at Rose triumphantly, and muttering,—

"Oh, these holy innocents; I knew that she was no better than any one else."

"Come here, mademoiselle," said Madame Saint-Godibert, looking at Rose-Marie angrily, "we know now why you refused to marry M. Roquet; this is very pretty, at your age to have intrigues found out, for shame, you ought to blush for it."

The poor little thing did blush, in fact, but it was not for shame but with grief at hearing such reproaches addressed to herself. She was about to answer when her uncle shouted,—

"Hold your tongue, you will deny it in vain; we know all, thanks to Fifine, whose cleverness is never in fault."

"Yes," resumed Madame Saint-Godibert, "we have already been told that you have served as a model for a painter. Fifine heard M. Dernesty say in a low tone on seeing you, 'She is better looking than her portrait which we saw at the painter's.' But we will not believe that, we refuse to suppose that so much perversity can be hidden in a girl of seventeen years."

"Oh, madame."

"Again we know that a young man prowls incessantly before the house to try and see you, and that this old Savenay, a man with white hair, takes a hand in that and similar intrigues; it is inconceivable."

"That astonishes me less," resumed M. Saint-

Godibert, "seeing that at the office I have often heard him sing

Zon, zon, flute et basse;
Zon, zon, violon,

what can you expect from a man of that age who sings these 'zon, zons'; but he won't sing them again under my roof, thank God!"

"Why, monsieur, will you send away this venerable man?" said Rose-Marie, looking imploringly towards her uncle.

"Yes, mademoiselle, this venerable man who goes up in the morning to your room to give you billet-doux from your lovers. He is worthy to be tried at the court of assizes. I have sent him away, mademoiselle; he will not again come into my house, and he will not support you in your rebellion against your relations."

"Oh, monsieur, it is shocking, this old man who was so good to me, he did not think there was any harm in coming to console me."

"To console you because a fine marriage is proposed to you. You make me sick at the stomach, mademoiselle; for the rest, your father shall know all, and he will not approve your conduct."

"Oh, please let me go back to him?"

"Hold your tongue! we have every desire, out of respect to ourselves, to hide your carryings on from this sensible M. Roquet. But remember, you must look upon him as your future husband,

and up to the time of your marriage we shall take care to watch you in such a manner that you cannot commit any more foolish actions."

Rose-Marie wished to answer, but they would not listen to her. They signed to her to go into the chamber where she worked, and there they left her alone. The poor child wept, she bitterly regretted having caused her old friend to lose his place. She prayed Heaven to help her, and she would have abandoned herself to despair altogether if the idea that Leopold would help her had not put a little hope into her heart.

At dinner time they made their young niece come to the table, where she had the pleasure of being seated beside M. Roquet, who continually kept one eye upon her and the other upon his plate, and who paid Rose-Marie very pronounced compliments, to which she answered nothing; but M. Roquet seemed to take that for modesty, and did not appear dissatisfied.

The evening passed by, during which M. Roquet still talked to Rose, who answered him only with deep sighs, and the gentleman with spectacles went to Madame Saint-Godibert, and said to her in a low tone,—

"I think that her feelings are commencing to stir, she has already uttered several sighs beside me; that is a good sign, is it not?"

"Rest assured," answered Angélique, "she will sigh a good deal more when you are her husband."

Rose-Marie awaited with the most lively impatience the moment when she would be free to go up to her room; it came at last, but hardly had she entered her chamber when she heard somebody double lock the door on the outside.

"What does that mean?" cried Rose.

"That means," said Mademoiselle Fifine from the hall, "that it is your aunt's orders, and is to restrain you from going out to walk tomorrow morning, if you wish to do so."

"A prisoner," said Rose, sinking into a chair, "a prisoner — do they think thus to procure my happiness? Oh, my good father, you would not approve this, and you would never take such means to marry your daughter."

An hour later someone tried to call Rose-Marie through the door. She recognized François' voice.

"What do you want, François?" she asked.

"Mademoiselle, I know that you are locked in. That is outrageous, and, if you like, I will take a hatchet and break your lock, that you may be free."

"Thank you, François, thank you, but don't do that; being locked in matters little to me. I should not dream of going out, and it is not necessary that you should get into trouble with your master for me, they would send you away also."

"I'll snap my fingers at them, mamzelle, if you wish it."

"No, François, I tell you that I don't mind being locked in."

"Very well, mamzelle, it's as you will, but I am always at your service." And François went back into his room, while Rose tried to find in sleep forgetfulness of her sorrow.

Several days passed in the same manner; Rose-Marie, whose aunt made her work as hard as she possibly could, carrying linen back and forth to Julien's chamber, but Mademoiselle Fifine was almost incessantly on her heels, so that it would have been impossible for the young girl to go out if she had had such an idea. Julien came no more to dinner with his parents, and seemed to wish to shun his cousin.

As to Frederic, the porter had orders to tell him that there was nobody at home at his uncle's. Rose-Marie had not seen him since the evening when M. Roquet had made his declaration, and the young girl felt much regret at being unable to see the only one of her relatives to whom she could look with confidence for the alleviation of her troubles.

But one day, on going down to her aunt, Rose-Marie thought she noticed comings and goings in the house which indicated that they were expecting company. Presently, in fact, her aunt said to her, in a tone that was less harsh than usual,—

"You will make yourself look as nice as you can today, mademoiselle, put on all the best that

you have, we have a great many people to dinner. This is a solemn occasion."

"If you will allow me I would rather remain in my room, madame."

"No, mademoiselle, you must be here, that is indispensable, and I hope that your conduct today will be worthy of our kindness to you."

Rose-Marie was very desirous of knowing why this occasion should be solemn, and why it was indispensable that she should be present. But her aunt had already left her, she would not deign to interrogate Mademoiselle Fifine, and she resolved to obey. She went upstairs very sadly to dress herself, and came tremblingly down to the drawing-room; for a secret presentiment told her that the preparation of today had some connection with her marriage to M. Roquet. When five o'clock struck, M. Roquet came in ceremonious full dress, all in black, and with spectacles with vermilion rims which appeared to embarrass him very much. He bowed very respectfully to his future aunt, then, advancing towards Rose-Marie, he took her hand and kissed it before the young girl had time to draw it away from him.

Presently came Monsieur and Madame Doguin, Monsieur and Madame Marmodin, Major Krouteberg, Monsieur and Mademoiselle Soufflat, then Cousin Brouillard, who had put on a new coat, but retained his old pantaloons, which were much too short. He was not sufficiently conscious of

the incongruity of his costume to prevent him from looking about him with a very curious air, as if asking what was about to take place, and what was the object of this dinner which was announced as a solemnity. Then M. Cendrillon also arrived, the only person who was not in black, which irritated Angélique's nerves, and she said to her husband,—

"Why have you invited this Cendrillon, who hasn't even changed his clothes to come here?"

"My dearest," answered Saint-Godibert, "I have told you already that when one is a millionnaire one has the right to be dirty. I am going to do some fine business with M. Cendrillon, who is sending a vessel filled with merchandise to the Island of Bourbon."

"But if he learns that you have sent away his old protégé, do you think he will be pleased?"

"I shall tell him that Papa Savenay encouraged my niece's faults and he will approve my having sent him away."

However, M. Cendrillon went to give Rose a little tap on the cheek, who smiled sadly at him and who would have much liked to inform him that they had sent her old friend away, but she dared not; besides her aunt was nearly always near her, as though she would prevent her from talking. Frederic came also and his eyes interrogated her as if to ask her the cause of her sadness, but Rose-Marie was silent; her aunt was beside

her. M. Brouillard walked about the drawing-room and went from one to the other, saying in a low tone,—

"What the deuce are they getting ready for here? Everybody looks mysterious, grave. Is Saint-Godibert going to dispose of his incumbrance? Well, provided that his dinner be good at least, what do I care. Oh, yes, you can't tell what these miserly fellows are going to do? Ha, ha! we shall see to-day whether François fills the glasses with madeira."

"We are only waiting now for my brother, the man of letters," remarked M. Saint-Godibert, "for M. Dernesty, who should come with him, and for my son Julien; but, my faith, since they are late I don't see why I should not immediately make the announcement I desire to the company. What do you think, Angélique?"

"Why, of course, you had better, dear," responded the fat lady.

M. Brouillard opened his ears, his eyes, and his nostrils, so that he would hear better; M. Soufflat mounted a little footstool, and everybody listened; but just as M. Saint-Godibert was about to speak, the door opened and his brother Mondigo came into the drawing-room. He did not seem to be in his ordinary frame of mind, his face was discomposed, his nose white, his hair in disorder, tumbling in every direction, which made his head resemble that of a Medusa. However, on

seeing the numerous company gathered at his brother's he tried to draw himself up, to smile even; then he hastily retired to a corner.

"My God! What is the matter with M. Mondigo to-day?" whispered Francine to Frederic.

"I don't know," answered the big young man, "but he has a face which might mean anything."

"Is it possible to come into society with hair so ill-combed as that!" murmured Angélique, While her husband shouted from afar,—

"Why, how's this?—where is your wife, and M. Dernesty?—Are they following you?"

The husband answered with a singular face,—

"My wife will not come, she is indisposed—will be indisposed for a long time; as for M. Dernesty, I don't need that he should accompany me."

This answer made some of the company chuckle; Francine and Frederic exchanged a look.

But M. Saint-Godibert, who at that moment troubled himself very little about his brother's affairs, stationed himself in the middle of the drawing-room, and said,—

"Ladies and gentlemen, I have the honor to inform you of the approaching marriage of my niece, Rose-Marie, and M. Roquet. It is their betrothal feast of which you are invited to partake to-day."

A murmur of surprise arose from the assembly; but while M. Roquet was bowing and receiving the compliments which some persons addressed to

him, Rose-Marie had become extremely pale and was on the point of losing consciousness, when Francine ran to support her in her arms, saying,—

"But this poor child feels ill, she seems as if she wanted to speak, and had not the strength."

"It is nothing, it is the effect of joy," said Madame Saint-Godibert, "it is not dangerous."

"No, aunt, no!" cried Frederic, running to offer a vinaigrette to his cousin, "no, it is not joy which makes my cousin ready to faint, it is her grief, her sorrow, which is killing her; for this union which you announce will make her unhappy. She detests M. Roquet, I know it, and it seems to me that you have no right to force her to contract this marriage."

"What do you mean by that, nephew? I think you are extremely bold to come and mix yourself up with what doesn't concern you," said M. Saint-Godibert, stifling with anger.

"Rose-Marie is my cousin, uncle, and it is right that I should protect her."

"What's this, what's this, what's going on here?" said M. Brouillard advancing, "why, I also am the little one's cousin and I have the right to be consulted, too."

"Why, now, my dear cousin," said Angélique, smiling most graciously on Brouillard, "don't you think also that this marriage will be most advantageous for our niece?"

Before M. Brouillard had decided what he

should answer, Rose-Marie, who had regained a little of her strength, said in a faltering voice,—

"I depend only upon my father, it is he alone, whom I wish, whom I ought to obey."

"Mademoiselle, we have his consent," answered Saint-Godibert.

Rose felt herself again overwhelmed. She was about to drop into her chair when a voice which was well known to her uttered these words,—

"It is not true, you have received no answer from him; a proof of which is that he has come here to give it in person."

It was Jerome Gogo, who had hastily entered the drawing-room, where his unexpected presence caused general astonishment. The strangers looked at the farmer with surprise, the Saint-Godiberts with stupefaction. Rose ran and threw herself into her father's arms, crying,—

"Oh, dear father, how happy I am, I knew very well that you would not abandon me."

Jerome, who had crossed the drawing-room without appearing at all disquieted by the persons who were there, pressed Rose-Marie in his arms, and covered her with kisses, exclaiming,—

"Me abandon you, my daughter, my child, my treasure! And who should look after your happiness if I don't? Don't cry any more, my poor little one, don't cry, your father will not leave you again, for he can see very well that these people do not know how to love you as he does."

"Why, it's that dear Cousin Gogo," said M. Brouillard, dwelling on the last name.

"Yes, cousin, as you say, it's Jerome Gogo, brother to M. Godichet — Godibert, Montrigo, Mon-nigaud, how do I know what it is — in fact, to my brothers here, who have thought fit to cast off their father's name — who knows whether they had not reason to do so — as for me, I have kept the name of Gogo pure and stainless, these gentlemen have perhaps not done as much for it."

The literary man did not answer, he seemed very much occupied in scratching his forehead.

"I have done as I thought best, brother," answered the banker, who was beside himself with anger. "I wished to assure the happiness of your daughter, whom you were pleased to send to me; if you are such a simpleton as to disapprove of the marriage which I have arranged for her you are free to take mademoiselle away."

"Why, certainly," said Jerome, "I do not approve a union which is displeasing to my daughter."

"Well, then, relieve us of the care of mademoiselle," cried Angélique, "her place is not here, and we do not care to keep any longer in our house a young person who has intrigues."

"Intrigues," cried Jerome, whose eyes shone with a threatening light, while Rose-Marie darted towards him as if to beg him not to believe her guilty; but her father did not let her speak, he embraced her anew, saying to her,—

"Be silent, my child, you have no need to justify yourself, I know that you have done nothing with which to reproach yourself; but those who forget themselves so far as to accuse you, those who before all these ladies and gentlemen do not fear to attack your honor, the most precious thing that a young girl has, those I will make blush for their conduct."

"Truly, Monsieur Jerome," cried Madame Saint-Godibert, "I repeat to you that your daughter has intrigues. A young man, who is always prowling around our house has sent a letter to her by an old goodman whom M. Saint-Godibert had the kindness to take into his office, and as this Papa Savenay complacently carried billet-doux up to mademoiselle, he has sent the old clerk away."

"Sent him away, my honest Papa Savenay!" cried M. Cendrillon, going towards the big Angélique. "Come, it's not possible. If my old friend has encouraged your niece's love affairs, it is probably because he saw nothing wrong in them."

"You speak well," said Jerome, going to take the capitalist's hand, "but I have done better, I have brought with me those who can make my daughter's innocence clear."

"This is very amusing," murmured M. Brouillard, rubbing his hands.

Then, pushing rather unceremoniously out of his way the people who were standing about, the farmer ran to open the door of the drawing-room;

he beckoned, and good Papa Savenay appeared with a young man, whose dress was both careful and elegant, and whom Rose-Marie recognized immediately as Leopold Bercourt.

"Come in, come in, don't be afraid, my friends," cried Jerome, "I thought your presence would be useful here; it seems there are some people present who wish to speak evil of my daughter, and I am not in the humor to bear it. Monsieur, my brother, allow me to present to you M. Leopold Bercourt, who, after obtaining his father's leave, came to my village to ask my daughter's hand in marriage, and I have given it because my daughter loves him, and because he is an honest, worthy young man who will not be ashamed of his wife's father, and who is not afraid to come to seek him in his village, although he is but a farmer. Well, then, it was he who watched over Rose-Marie, because he knew that they wished without consulting me, to dispose of her, and hang it, he was very right to watch over our treasure. And this good old man, whom I am so pleased to know, who formerly succored my daughter, when, on arriving in Paris she could not find her uncles there because the one who gave us their addresses did not tell us also that they had changed their names; which is a piece of mischief for which I shall hold Cousin Brouillard to account."

Here the man with the fox's muzzle hung his head, pretending to have let his handkerchief fall.

"Well, now, this good M. Savenay, who is here, was he wrong to protect the honest love of these children? — was he wrong to console this poor little thing who passed her time here in weeping? — was he wrong to come and warn me of all that was transpiring without my permission, and to tell me that my poor child was unhappy?"

M. Saint-Godibert was embarrassed, he did not know what to say, he had not expected to see Papa Savenay arrive with this young man who loved Rose-Marie; but Angélique was terribly angry. She tore the edges of her cuffs, and exclaimed,—

"What does all that matter, to allow himself to bring two men here, it is incomprehensible. This was no doubt arranged. A scandal, all cut and dried."

Then suddenly, as if struck by a sudden idea, the fat woman left the drawing-room, muttering,—

"Oh, they shall see that I have not lied to them."

However, Frederic went to greet his uncle, and congratulate his cousin. He pressed Leopold's hand, and the latter looked with love and pride on her whose heart he was so proud to possess.

M. Cendrillon approached Papa Savenay, took him by the hand, and highly praised all that he had done. He promised to again find him employment, and then poked Jerome in the chest, exclaiming,—

"You're a father after my own heart. I never had any children myself, never had the time, but, hang it, if I had had them I would not have allowed anyone to molest them."

Meanwhile M. Mondigo seemed oblivious to all that was passing and had not left the corner where he had placed himself, M. Roquet did nothing but put on and take off his spectacles, and looked at everybody as if to know whether, after all, there was any hope of his marriage taking place.

Cousin Brouillard, who alone had noticed Angélique's sudden departure, was very impatient to see her return, because he hoped for some new scene. However, Jerome had already taken his daughter by the hand, and was saying,—

"Come, my child, come, my son-in-law, and you, my old friend, now that Rose-Marie can no longer be accused of intrigues, we may say 'good-by' to the company and retire." But just as these four persons were leaving the drawing-room, Madame Saint-Godibert came back and stopped them, exclaiming,—

"Don't leave us so quickly, M. Jerome. Before taking away your daughter, of whom you are so proud, I must at least compliment you upon her scrupulousness. I have been upstairs to her room in order to assure myself, whether, before leaving us, mademoiselle had not carried there by chance some things which did not belong to her. I had

rightly divined, here is what I found among the effects of your daughter. Ha, ha! I could hardly believe, however, that she had so deceived herself as to think that it could possibly belong to her."

While saying these words, Angélique drew from her pocket, and showed to all the company, the little pistol which Rose-Marie had found in the forest of Fontainebleau.

"A pistol," murmured each one in surprise.

"Hang it!" said Jerome, "your supposition is infamous," glancing angrily at his sister-in-law. "To dare to believe that this pistol was stolen by my daughter! Why, she had this before she came to Paris. Ask this good old man where she found it, he will tell you that it was in the forest of Fontainebleau, where she was a witness of the crime of which he was the victim. This pistol fell from the pocket of one of the two wretches who despoiled him."

"Yes, yes, that is the truth," cried Papa Savenay.

"I do not know whether mademoiselle found a pistol in the forest," exclaimed Madame Saint-Godibert, "that story seems rather romantic to me, but in any case it was not this one, for this pistol, I declare, belongs to my son. This richly carved weapon is easily recognizable, and, besides, the day before yesterday I saw it while I was looking for a book on the shelves of Julien's library; but since that time mademoiselle has been to carry

some linen which she had mended to my son's room, and that is how the pistol came to be among her effects."

While Madame Saint-Godibert seemed pleased at what she was saying, Jerome and Rose-Marie looked at each other, and then their eyes met those of Papa Savenay. They all seemed greatly agitated and fearful of communicating their thoughts, but M. Cendrillon appeared to divine their reflections.

Leopold approached Madame Saint-Godibert, and said to her,—

"Before accusing your niece of an action which she is incapable of committing, did you go to your son's room to see whether the weapon he possessed was missing?"

"No," answered Angélique, "what is the good of looking in his room when it is here. If my son were here, he would tell you the same himself."

"You may be mistaken," cried Frederic, "and as it is necessary that you should render justice to my Cousin Rose, I will go and look in Julien's room."

"I will go and help you look," said M. Cendrillon, "for I have an idea in my head that all this may perhaps put us on the traces of—"

M. Cendrillon paused as if he feared that he had said too much, then he took Frederic by the arm and led him away, saying,—

"Come, young fellow, it is necessary that all this should be explained."

However, Jerome, old Savenay, and Rose-Marie remained silent, but in the looks they cast on Monsieur and Madame Saint-Godibert there was more of pity than of anger.

The banker did not know what to think of the incident which his wife had provoked. The latter, still delighted at what she had done, because she believed that she had humiliated her niece before all the company, approached each one in the hopes of being congratulated on her perspicacity, but she failed in her design, for in place of complimenting her, every one appeared constrained and embarrassed with her. At length a mysterious silence reigned in the drawing-room, which seemed the precursor of some great event.

Several moments passed thus, though it seemed much longer to everybody, during which François came to announce that the dinner was served, but nobody would leave the drawing-room before Frederic and M. Cendrillon returned. At length they reappeared, the former was pale, and wore a look of consternation; the second, whose features had an expression of severity which was not habitual to them, held in one of his hands a little pistol, of which he allowed only the barrel to be seen. He showed it thus to the company, saying,—

"The pistol was in its place, here it is, and it is not similar to that found by mademoiselle. That estimable girl is then fully justified; besides, no-

body here could have believed for a moment that she would have had the desire to appropriate that which did not belong to her."

Madame Saint-Godibert, who did not believe that she could be mistaken, wished to examine the pistol which M. Cendrillon held in his hand. She approached him, saying,—

"But, first, monsieur, it is necessary that I should see it myself."

M. Cendrillon did not allow her to do so. He took her by the arm, and held her tightly, whispering in her ear,—

"Do you wish to make known to everybody your son's dishonor?"

The stout woman was startled, she became pallid, agitated, and turned her eyes toward the ground.

M. Cendrillon hastened to resume,—

"M. Godibert, you have still some accounts to regulate with your brother, his dear daughter, and my old friend, but that will not amuse the company, who, besides, desire to go to the table. It will be necessary for you to beg some one to replace you in doing the honors of your table."

"Oh, yes, yes," stammered the banker, whom the sudden depression of his wife had frozen with terror. "Cousin Brouillard, will you replace me? — and will our guests excuse us?"

Cousin Brouillard, who saw that there was some mystery in all this, did not know whether he

should or should not consent to go and do the honors of the table for M. Saint-Godibert. However, as he was rather fond of his dinner, he decided to accept, persuaded that, sooner or later, he should know how to discover what they wished to hide from him. The company, therefore, went into the dining-room, led by M. Brouillard, who cried,—

"Come, now, ladies and gentlemen, I am going to do the honors of the table, and I assure you that I shall do them well, and if no one eats, it will not be my fault."

The Gogo family remained in the drawing-room with Papa Savenay, Leopold and M. Cendrillon. Frederic looked at the Saint-Godiberts and seemed afraid to speak, but when everybody else had gone and the doors were shut, M. Cendrillon drew near to the banker, and allowed him to see the pistol which he had up to that time held almost hidden.

"Here is the weapon which was in your son's room, and here is the pistol which your wife took from Rose-Marie's chamber, and which is the one that your niece picked up in the forest after the flight of the robbers."

The banker examined the two pistols and answered,—

"They are alike, one is absolutely like the other, what does that mean?"

"It means that your son is one of the robbers

who stopped and took sixty thousand francs from my old friend, Papa Savenay, in the forest of Fontainebleau."

M. Saint-Godibert fell into a chair, muttering,—

"No, no, it is not possible."

"Oh, that would be too shocking," cried the stout woman, "you are mistaken,—and what proof—what proof—"

"Probably we are mistaken," said old Savenay, "it is not likely M. Saint-Godibert's son—"

"Hold your tongue," said M. Cendrillon, in the voice of a stentor, "even when you are sure that we have found one of the guilty ones, you would be capable of denying it in order that the family may not be dishonored. But I shall not consent to that. First of all, it is necessary that truth should see daylight, and that your money should be restored. It will serve to teach them later to have some regard for other people's feelings. Yes, I persist in what I have said, for it is not on this weapon alone that I found my suspicions. A number of circumstances which have struck me, of observations which I have made, are for me as so many rays of light. Yes, Papa Savenay, young Julien was one of your robbers, and do you wish that I should say who is the person whom I would wager to be his accomplice?"

"Yes, speak, tell us," said Frederic.

"Well, then, it is one of your dear friends, M. Dernesty."

At the name of Dernesty, Mondigo, who up to that time had appeared still preoccupied, made a bound off his chair, and darted into the middle of the drawing-room, exclaiming,—

"Oh, yes, monsieur, that scoundrel is capable of anything, he is a damnable fellow, a hound! Do you know what he has done to me? Oh, I must tell you, between ourselves I can confess it. To-day I went out to go and read five acts to a theatrical manager. Thinking that I should return late, I said to my wife — perfidious Clémence! — I said to my wife, 'Dernesty will come to call for us to go to dinner at my brother's, don't wait for me, go together; I will go there by myself.' I started with my drama, but by a chance, very unfortunate for me, it happened that the manager could not hear me to-day as had been arranged. It was too early to come here then, and I said to myself, 'I'll take my drama home.' I went in, I had another key with me, and the porter shouted, 'Your maid has gone to the Jardin des Plantes to see the monkeys, but madame has not gone out.' Very well, I went upstairs; I let myself in so as not to disturb Clémence; I went into her room, and I found my wife there with that scoundrel Dernesty. Imagine my horror. The English call that a criminal conversation — a queer kind of a conversation. I wanted to kill the fellow, but I was so astounded I could not even believe my eyes. He escaped and he

did well. As to Clémence, I treated her as she deserved, and I shall separate myself from her. Yes, I shall leave her; though it will be embarrassing for a man of my habits, for I like to find dinner ready when I return from a rehearsal."

M. Mondigo's relation would perhaps have been interesting, had not something of graver moment occupied all their minds. M. Saint-Godibert did not know what to believe. His wife attentively examined the two pistols, and Jerome pressed his daughter to his breast as he thanked Heaven for having given him a child who would not make him blush. Rose-Marie looked happily at Leopold, and seemed to say, "You see very well that I am worthy of you." Suddenly, the drawing-room door opened and young Julien entered, saying,—

"Pardon me, I am a little late, but they told me that part of the company were at the table and that you were still with my cousin's father. I came to be introduced to him — but, my God! what has happened?"

The young man paused, for he could not fail to notice the singular manner in which he was welcomed. At the sight of him, his father and mother turned away their heads with a kind of terror. Frederic and Rose-Marie sadly lowered their eyes, and Jerome looked with pity upon the nephew whom he saw for the first time, while Papa Savenay had a look of consternation.

On perceiving the old man, Julien became uneasy, he did not know what to think. He looked fearfully around him and met M. Cendrillon's look. The latter approached him, saying,—

"M. Julien I must have a moment's conversation with you alone, your family will be willing to leave us together."

"Oh, yes, yes," said Frederic, who understood M. Cendrillon's intentions, in wishing to spare Julien the shame of confessing his crime before his family, and he led away Monsieur and Madame Saint-Godibert. But while they were following him, M. Cendrillon approached the banker, and said to him in a low tone,—

"Listen to the conversation which I am going to have with your son, then I am sure you will have no doubt of it."

Every one departed, leaving Julien alone with M. Cendrillon; they pretended to close the door, but were careful to leave it ajar that they might hear all.

The young man had become pale and trembling, though he did not yet know what M. Cendrillon wished to say to him, but as his conscience had for a long time been burdened with remorse he always suspected that his crime would be discovered, and his accomplice was not there to re-assure him. M. Cendrillon had put one of the pistols in his pocket, and held the other out to Julien, saying,—

"Is this yours?"

Julien was surprised, and muttered,—

"Why, of course it is mine, this pistol was in my room, why has any one taken it from there?"

"I will tell you just now, but will you first answer me. Have you not a pair of them?"

Julien's uneasiness increased, he hesitated, and at length muttered,—

"Pardon me, I had the pair, but I lost the other a long time ago."

M. Cendrillon suddenly pulled the other pistol from his pocket and showed it to Julien, exclaiming,—

"Wait, here it is, they have found it?"

Julien became livid, his features were discomposed, he could hardly articulate.

"Oh, yes, that's the other, and who could have — who found it?"

"Some one who was in the forest of Fontainebleau, and who witnessed your crime when you stopped and robbed my old friend Savenay."

Julien first let his head fall on the back of his chair, but presently he fell to his knees, abased his head to the floor, and muttered,—

"Oh, yes, yes, it was me, I am a wretch, but don't betray me to my parents."

A cry came from behind the door, Julien recognized his mother's voice, he struck his head against the floor, he cried,—

"They are listening, they know all, let me die,

monsieur; give me a weapon that I may kill myself, I cannot show myself to them."

M. Cendrillon was keenly moved by the heart-rending cry which he had heard; however, he recalled his firmness, raised Julien, and said,—

"You are very guilty, but death would not repair your error, for you would go to it in dishonor; there is something which will prove much better, and that is sincere repentance, which will efface it, which will permit them to forget your past life. But first of all, the name of your accomplice?"

"Dernesty."

"I had divined it, that is why he never would speak in Savenay's presence."

"Oh, monsieur, I don't pretend to make an excuse for my crime, that is impossible; however, but for Dernesty I should never have had the thought of committing such an action. I was much in debt, I was secretly given to gambling, to pleasure, I allowed myself to be led; then one day, in a trip to the country which I had made with him, he met this old man; he learned that he had sixty thousand francs, and oh, I would rather have died than have yielded to his counsel, and since then I have not had a day's peace."

"You cannot remain in France. I am going to send a vessel to Bourbon, repair to Havre, you shall start with that vessel; I will go and write to the captain. Down there work without relaxation, let your conduct be exemplary, so that no one has

the least reproach against you. In a dozen years you can return to your country; there is no fault so great that true repentance cannot efface it."

"Oh, monsieur."

"Go and do your packing, and start at once, you have no money, perhaps, take this purse, your father will approve of all that I do; go, and remember to deserve one day to see your parents again."

Julien carried one of M. Cendrillon's hands to his lips, he could hardly speak, then he left, swearing that he would one day be worthy to come back to his country.

The capitalist was not long alone, all the family returned to him. Monsieur and Madame Saint-Godibert threw themselves into his arms weeping.

"Do you approve of what I have done?" asked M. Cendrillon.

"Oh, you have saved our honor, but this wretch, Dernesty?"

"I charge myself to look after him," said Frederic, "I will be my Uncle Mondigo's avenger."

The literary man pressed the big young man's hand, exclaiming,—

"Very well, Frederic, very well. Give that scoundrel a good taste of your sword, and later I shall see whether I ought to forgive my wife, who has, perhaps, been led away like Julien."

"As to my old friend Savenay?" said M. Cendrillon.

The banker did not allow him to finish, he hastened to say,—

"Tomorrow I will remit to M. Savenay the sixty thousand francs which were taken from his pocket-book and I offer twenty-five thousand more to my niece for her dowry."

"Oh, I thank you, monsieur," said Leopold, seizing one of Rose-Marie's hands, "but mademoiselle has no need of a dowry; my father knows that I have met a woman whose virtues will make my happiness, and says that that is worth more than money."

Jerome gave Leopold a friendly clasp of the hand, but M. Saint-Godibert resumed, looking humiliated,—

"If my brother Jerome refuses me, I shall believe that he has a grudge against me still, that he has not forgiven me for having changed my name; however, he is well avenged, for, as he said just now, the name of Gogo is still without stain, while those that we have taken —" the banker did not finish, and hid his face in his hand, and Mondigo turned away, still rubbing his forehead. But Jerome ran to his brothers and said to them,—

"All is forgotten, brothers should be united. Nicolas, I accept the dowry which you offer my daughter, and it goes without saying, that this honest fellow must accept it, too. As for you, Eustache, come and see us sometimes, that will distract you from your household troubles. Try

to be happy in the city, as for me, I shall return to my village as soon as the union of these children is consummated."

"And if you will permit me, Papa Jerome," said old Savenay, "I will go and live with you. I have no further need of clerking it in Paris, but need friends among whom I can peacefully end my days."

"Agreed, Papa Savenay," answered Jerome, "we can talk together of my Rose-Marie, and in the summer the young married couple will come for a change to us, as well as my nephew Frederic."

"You don't expect me, then?" said M. Cendrillon, "but you shall see me more than once at Avon, M. Jerome, and in the mean time I invite myself as a witness to the marriage of this pretty child; but now, good-by, my honest people, here are some poor parents who need to be alone, and we should respect their grief."

"And everybody who is in there," murmured Angélique, pointing to the dining-room.

"Don't disturb yourself," said M. Cendrillon, "I am going to tell the company that you are greatly indisposed, that your husband cannot leave you, and when they have dined sufficiently I assure you that they will go without asking anything further."

Jerome left with his daughter, Leopold, and Papa Savenay; Frederic had already gone off by

himself; M. Mondigo departed, asking himself whether he should return to dine at his own house; and Julien's father and mother went to hide themselves in the privacy of their apartments. M. Cendrillon alone went to the dining-room, where he announced Madame Saint-Godibert's indisposition, which did not allow her husband to leave her. Everyone appeared greatly afflicted, but they nevertheless continued to do justice to their hosts' dinner.

M. Brouillard seemed very curious; he asked M. Cendrillon a number of questions, the latter applied himself to his dinner and contented himself with answering,—

"Monsieur, you have already eaten, permit me to do the same."

"But this good Jerome?" said Brouillard.

"Everything is arranged, he is reconciled with his brothers, and has gone off with his daughter."

"Then decidedly I shall not marry Mademoiselle Rose-Marie," murmured M. Roquet.

"No, monsieur, I advise you to carry your views elsewhere. This affair is finished for you."

"But my Cousin Mondigo?" questioned Brouillard.

"He has gone back to his wife, who is ill."

"And this good Saint-Godibert's son, where is he? — what has become of him? Is Julien sick also? There must be an epidemic in the family."

"Julien," answered the capitalist, "why he

started this morning for Havre, he is going to travel. It is his father's idea, he would have informed you of that at dinner."

They began to whisper again, to make conjectures, but, as M. Cendrillon had foreseen, after having taken coffee and liqueur every one began to think of how he should employ his evening, and they went off without further occupying themselves with the Saint-Godiberts; because there is an old proverb which says, each man for himself, and this proverb is the first law among men of the world.

The next morning Frederic came early to the banker's house, and penetrated to his bedroom, where he found the married couple reunited, for nothing reunites people more quickly than grief.

"Now," said the big young man, with an air of satisfaction, "one who has ruined your son will nevermore carry dishonor into any family."

"What!" cried Angélique, "M. Dernesty?"

"I went to find him this morning at daybreak, I took a pretext to provoke him. I told him that my Uncle Mondigo had charged me to avenge his injuries. I don't know whether he divined that another motive animated me, but, as if he feared what I should say to him, he immediately accepted the challenge. Providence watched over me, Dernesty received a ball in his chest, and fell never to rise again. I approached him to hear his last words; he murmured Julien's name, he

appeared to wish to say more, he looked up to Heaven; the greater criminal is dead, the other will efface his fault by his repentance. You may one day entirely forget this misfortune."

M. Saint-Godibert again thanked his nephew for having punished the one by whom his son had been led into the paths of crime, and Frederic hastened to go and find the literary man to acquaint him with the result of the duel. M. Mondigo threw himself on Frederic's neck on learning that he had killed his wife's seducer; then he exclaimed,—

"I shall run and forgive Clémence, she is with one of her aunts. I shall go and seek her and bring her home in triumph; for the matter of that I have been careful to say that she was in the country with one of her friends, because I foresaw how this would turn out."

A fortnight after these events a marriage was celebrated in the church of Saint Vincent de Paul; everybody admired the grace, the beauty, the virginal look of the young bride, and, as they looked at the bridegroom, they said,—

"He is very good-looking too."

Is it necessary to name this couple? Leopold had with him, his father, his sister, who shared his joy; and by Rose-Marie one perceived Jerome's radiant face, and then that of Papa Savenay, who felt himself rejuvenated by twenty years. Frederic was there, also, rejoicing at the happiness of

those whom he sincerely loved. Cousin Brouillard showed his fox's muzzle, making his reflections on the absence of the bride's two aunts; and allowing jokes to escape him which proved that Mondigo had taken him into his confidence as to the accident that had happened to him. M. Cendrillon kept near his old friend and looked with great pleasure at Rose-Marie, to whom, before they started for the church, he had presented a circlet for the neck adorned with diamonds of great value. He had appeared so happy in offering this present that it was impossible for them to refuse it. The literary man, and likewise the banker, attended their niece's wedding. M. Saint-Godibert, whose face was still sad and careworn, left directly after the ceremony. As to Mondigo, he stayed to the repast which followed, during which he sang a song he had written for the wedding; on hearing which M. Brouillard muttered to himself,—

"My Cousin Mondigo has never been so cheerful as since he has known that his wife was unfaithful to him."

The day after the marriage it was understood that they should accompany Jerome back to Avon and stay some days with him. At break of day a big barouche, belonging to M. Cendrillon, and which was driven by that gentleman himself, carried off the young married couple, and their sister, Jerome, Frederic, and Papa Savenay; and the

party, who had wished to start very early in the morning in order that they might arrive sooner at Avon, crossed Paris at daybreak and were just leaving the line of the boulevards, when, at the entrance to the Rue Saint-Antoine, Frederic shouted to M. Cendrillon to stop for a moment, for he had seen a face which he knew.

It was M. Richard who was going home after a night's dancing, and had been flogged by a man who, without respect for his ball costume, had rolled him down and held him in the gutter.

"It's that hound, Richard!" cried Frederic.

At this name, which recalled the man who had slandered his wife, Leopold wanted to get down out of the carriage to chastise him; Jerome wished to do likewise, but Rose-Marie held them, making them observe that another had charged himself with this duty, and this other was Désiré Glureau, the man with the plaited hat, who, recognizing Rose-Marie and Papa Savenay in the barouche, approached them, bowing, and said to them, while Richard slunk off,—

"A very good day, mamzelle, monsieur, and the company. I was in the act of inspecting my sweepers and was going to drink some white wine with Féroce and Ratmort, the two friends over there, when I saw this ugly coxcomb just turning the corner of the street; for a long time past I have had a desire to give him a hiding, I accosted him and proposed to him a duel with the

feet, but he was chicken-hearted and wanted to get out of it and then I paid him out. I assure you he will remember it for a long time."

"Thank you, my honest fellow," said Leopold, "thank you doubly — for you formerly protected the young lady who today is my wife, and you have chastised the one who had slandered her. Will you accept my purse that you may drink to my happiness?"

"Oh, Mamzelle Rose is your wife?" answered the man with the Cossack's face, "well, so much the better! I acted disinterestedly, but I accept in obedience to your wishes; we will have a little wedding feast with Bichat and the friends. Good-day, ladies and gentlemen."

The barouche rolled on again, bearing to Avon all these persons, whose faces expressed the sweetest joy; Jerome looked happier than any of them for he felt so pleased, so proud, although he had never changed his name. Had his brothers as good reason for being pleased and proud as had he?